

Dick Rodney



By James Grant

NOVELS AT TWO SHILLINGS.

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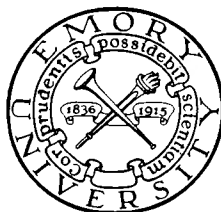
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DICK RODNEY;

OR,

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BY

JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF

"THE ROMANCE OF WAR," "JACK MANLY,"
ETC. ETC.

NEW EDITION.

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DICK RODNEY;

OR,

THE ADVENTURES OF AN ETON BOY.

CHAPTER I.

THE ETON BOY.

IN the relation of the following adventures I do not mean to illustrate the principle maintained by some writers, that by an inevitable course of events in life, *that* becomes fate, which at first was merely *choice*; but rather to show how, by a remarkable combination of circumstances (to a great extent beyond my own control), I was involved in a series of perils and peregrinations, such as rarely fall to the lot even of those who have the most restless of dispositions.

That my temperament was, and is still, something of this nature, I must confess; and the reading of my leisure hours—books of wild adventure by field and flood (I have devoured them all, from the volumes of dear old Daniel Defoe, to those of the

Railway Library), filled my mind with vague longings and airy fancies, for greater achievements than our periodical regatta or the ranks of our Eton Rifle Volunteer Corps were likely to afford, although I deemed myself by no means an undistinguished member of the latter.

I had been for the usual time an "oppidan" at Eton; but, though standing high in favour of the Reverend M.A. with whom I was boarded, of the Vice-Provost, and other functionaries, I had, unfortunately and unwisely, spent too much of my time with the boxing-gloves and fencing foils; at cricket in the playing fields; in rowing on the river—that old traditional amusement of our Etonians; in training for the great 4th of June, the College Regatta day; and in erratic excursions to Windsor and elsewhere—to hope for transference to Cambridge.

This had long been the dearest wish of my father, poor man! but in his letters to me the names of Walpole, Canning, Fox, Wellington, Hallam, and other *alumni* of our great seminary, were rehearsed again and again without effect; and he never failed to remind me, in the words of old Lambarde, that it is always to Cambridge "the scole of Eton sendeth her ripe fruite."

I had earned the unpleasant reputation of being an idler, though by no means one; and this was

oddly enough confirmed, when one day I narrowly escaped drowning in the same pool, if not among the same weeds, where George, Earl Waldegrave, an Eton boy in his tenth year, perished so long ago as 1794, when bathing in the Thames, near a field called the Brocas.

"Existence," says a certain writer, "appears to me scarcely existence, without its struggles and its successes. I should ever like to have some great end before me, for the striving to attain amid a crowd of competitors, would make me feel all the glory of life."

With such vague ideas floating before me, I returned from Eton *last year*, and found myself at my father's house, the old and secluded Rectory of Erlesmere, in a very undecided frame of mind as to the future, and the profession I should adopt.

My father, as before, urged King's College as a proper preparation for any profession.

My mother hinted that our name had shone in the navy, and cast a glance at a large portrait which hung in the dining-room. It represented George Lord Rodney, the castigator of the Spaniards, in a full bob-wig and white satin breeches, boarding the leading ship of the Caracca fleet, amid a whirlwind of torn rigging, smoke, and cannon-balls, forming a background by no means hilarious.

But my father pooh-poohed this. I was already far too old for the time at which the navy is entered—to wit, the mature years of thirteen.

Then my aunt Etty, who still curled her hair in the fashion of thirty years ago, recommended the army with a pensive air ; for she had been engaged to a young sub, who was killed at—I must not say *where*, for it was a great many years ago, and Aunt Etty is unmarried still ; but her views, though warmly seconded by sisters Dot and Sybil (who saw military balls and pic-nics in perspective), did not accord with mine, for I had spent two years or more in our Eton rifle corps, and the monotony of the drill—especially that boring *curriculum* of Hythe position (I went through the musketry class), worried me, as I had wilfully deemed myself able to sight my weapon and bring down either a Frenchman or a pheasant without it.

At Aunt Etty's suggestion, my father would shake his white head, and say, quoting the author of Ecclesiasticus,

“ ‘There are two things which grieve my heart to see : a man of war that suffereth from poverty, and men of understanding that are not set by.’ The sword, Etty, is but a poor inheritance ; better send Dick to the counting-house of his uncle, Rodney and Co., in London.”

But I trembled at this suggestion, as it did not

accord with my own brilliant views in any way ; and so months passed idly by.

I missed the manly amusements of Eton, and the hilarity of my class-fellows ; and though loving well my home and family, when the novelty of my return and of perfect freedom passed away, I longed for a change of scene—a stirring occupation—an active employment.

Is destiny stronger than intention ?

I should hope not ; yet for a time I was almost inclined to think so, after the terrible episode by which I was suddenly torn from my home, and cast upon that world which, hitherto, I had viewed through the sunny medium of my day-dreams and romances alone.

Our Rectory is situated a mile distant from the sea, of which an ample view can be had from the upper windows. Behind the house grows a coppice of mighty oaks, the gnarled arms of which bear loads of rustling foliage that form long leafy dells, through which the sun can scarcely penetrate in summer,—trees so old that the mind becomes lost in attempting to conceive what was there before they grew, or *who* planted them, and of all that has passed in the changing world, of all that have been born, have lived long lives, died, and been laid in their silent graves, since these old oaks were acorns, twigs, and saplings !

The Rectory of Erlesmere is an antique mansion, with projecting oriel windows, the mullions of which are almost hidden by ivy, woodbine, and honeysuckle. One portion terminates in a steep dove-cot gable, the other in a kind of tower, wherein, says tradition, an old rector of former times defended himself against the Puritans, and valiantly blazed away with a matchlock through some narrow slits, in which the martins now built their nests in peace, and over which the China roses grew undisturbed; while against the strong old wall my sisters Sybil and Dot had their fernery, to them an object of great solicitude and interest, as they were very learned in the science of all manner of leaves, blades, and twigs, and knew their mysterious names.

Close by is our old Rectory church, with its brass-mounted tombs of the Middle Ages, and its black oak pews of the Puritan times, where every Sunday and holiday the rays of light fell through the painted windows on the bowed heads of the country people while my father preached.

Beyond the house and church stretches a fair green English lawn, whereon a herd of deer are grazing, with the summer sunshine falling on their smooth dapple coats as they toss their antlers; and, when scared by the whistle of the distant railway

train, they glide away to the oak coppice, that is older than the days of the Tudors or Stuarts.

That coppice and the sea-shore, but especially the latter, were my favourite resorts. Daily I wandered by the beach, listening to the surge that chafed upon the layers of pebbles, shells, and seaweed, thinking of Danish Canute and his servile courtiers, or filled by those vague, solemn, and pleasing thoughts, which the sight of an object so mighty and mysterious as the boundless ocean creates within us.

The monotonous sound of wave after wave, as they broke on the flat beach, made me think of lands and shores, of people, cities, and adventures far, far away from our quiet old ivy-clad Rectory and its daily routine. Thus, every piece of drift wood, every strange fishbone and mouldered piece of timber which the ocean cast at my feet, became a source of interest for the mind to ruminate upon.

I remember the masts of a sunken vessel being discovered one morning, about two miles from the shore, and they were long a source of speculation to me. A mystery hovered about these rotting spars, these slimy ropes that waved in the sea breeze, and the hull that lay amid the rocks and weeds so far down below.

What was her story, what the fate of her crew, none could guess, as no bodies ever came ashore with the tide.

When a ship appeared at the horizon, my eyes followed her until her sails melted into the distant haze, and then it seemed as if spirit and fancy pursued her together upon the world of waters.

Generally we saw only coasters creeping along, or colliers bound for the Thames, with their dingy canvas, their black sides, and encumbered decks but more than once we were favoured by seeing a British line-of-battle ship in all her glory—one the Channel squadron, no doubt—with her squared yards, her flush decks, her snow-white hammocks in the nettings—the ports triced up, and the triple tier of sixty-eights or thirty-twos peering through them ; the scarlet ensign floating at her gaff peak the officers lounging on the poop, the red-coated marines at their posts ; and high over all, the long whip-like pennant streaming on the air, from the mainmast head.

Such a sight, under a splendid sunshine, when the summer sea was only rippled by a gentle breeze, to catch which every inch of canvas was spread to the yard-heads, might make the coldest heart quicken ; and it certainly made *me* think of my mother's wishes, and of old Rodney in his bob-

wig and ruffles, scrambling at the head of his boarders, sword in hand, up the carved and gilded side of the Spanish galleon—of Boscawen and Benbow, Captain Cook, and Robinson Crusoe; for the real and the ideal were all blended together in my wayward mind.

CHAPTER II.

CAPTAIN ZEERVOGEL.

Two miles from the Rectory is the village or small seaport of Erlesmere.

It is a sunshiny little place, having a row of fishermen's houses, that are covered by woodbine and honeysuckle, amid which, and over which, are quantities of brown nets and black bladders, drying in the breeze.

Garlands of red-floats are tossed upon the same breeze, as they are strung in lines across the little street ; and others, that are painted yellow, nestle, like great pumpkins, amid the luxuriant masses of leaves which cover the picturesque little dwellings. Boats of all sizes and rusty anchors encumber the little street, which is paved with round stones ; while oars, spare yards, and masts stand against the walls and eaves in all directions.

Swarms of red-cheeked children gambol amid this nautical *débris* ; and they bring such quantities

of shells and pebbles from the sea-beach, that there are as many in the street as on the shore.

One of the leading features in the fisher-village of Erlesmere is a little public-house, at the ivy-covered porch of which a group of burly weather-beaten fellows in long boots, striped shirts, and red nightcaps, are constantly smoking, drinking, and "taking squints to seaward" through an old battered telescope, "served" round with spun-yarn. Near it is a small dockyard, where their boats are built, tarred, and painted, and where a passin gcoaster may have a trivial repair effected, and occasionally be hove down.

This dock is inclosed by a low ruinous wall, but, of course, is open towards the sea. It is full of well seasoned logs, queer odds and ends of trees—it is redolent of tar and bilge, and is knee-deep in chips and shavings. Its only ornament is a flag-staff, whereon an old union jack is displayed on national holidays; for we are very loyal people in Erlesmere, no penny newspaper having ever found its way there to create disunion among us. We have no traditions that go beyond the days of Nelson, Howe, and Duncan; and one old fellow, the patriarch of the village, remembers well that sunny morning in the last days of 1805, when a great squadron was seen standing slowly up-channel, with all their ensigns half hoisted, for the hero of Trafalgar lay dead in the cabin of the *Victory*!

It happened, only *last year*, that a small Dutch schooner of some fifty tons was laid down on the gridiron at Erlesmere dock, for the purpose of being repaired. This was an event of some importance, and the whole nautical population cheerfully lent a hand in unloading her, and securing the cargo, which consisted of apples and Tergou cheeses ; while her skipper, Captain Zeervogel, and the six men who composed his crew, became for the time the lions and oracles of the smoking-room and porch of the ivy-covered tavern, where it was tacitly agreed that nothing should be said about Lord Duncan, or "the licking he gave these Dutch lubbers off the Texel," in our grandfathers' days.

I had never seen a Dutch craft before ; thus the quaint aspect of this schooner, with her deep waist, her bow and stern which were so clumsy in their form and strength, so exactly alike, and tilted up till she resembled a cheese cut in half—her lee-boards, her brown oak planks, all bright with varnish, and her little cabin windows encircled by alternate stripes of red, green, and white paint, all made her, to me, a source of wonder ; and I was daily on board, having obtained a free entry, after the bestowal of some schnaps (*i. e.*, gin and water) upon the captain, Jan van Zeervogel, who told me many a strange tale of the North Sea, for he was a pleasant and communicative old fellow, having, as he

told me, a wife and children, who kept his farm on the isle of Wolfersdyck, near South Beveland, while he tempted the dangers of the ocean to dispose of its agricultural produce.

One night, while the schooner was still on the gridiron, but when her repairs were nearly completed, I was with him in the little dungeon which he called his cabin ; darkness had set in, and the hour was late—later than I ought to have been aboard—for we kept early hours at the Rectory ; but the novelty of the situation, the old Dutchman's stories, the fumes of his meerschaum, and the effect of some peaches, which he gave me from a large gallipot, wherein his wife had preserved them in brandy, rendered me careless as to how the time passed.

“So, Captain Zeervogel,” said I, “you are a farmer as well as a mariner?”

“Yes, a schiffer as well as a boor, a plougher alike of the land and sea,” he replied, in good English. “I have a farm” (he pronounced it *varrm*, and so on, using consonants in a mode with which I shall not afflict the reader), “at Wolfersdyck, which is one of the most pleasant of the Zealand isles, and is about six miles long. It was larger once, but when the dykes broke, the sea swallowed up a great portion of it. About three hundred years ago the sea burst over all Beveland, and for many a

year nothing of it was visible above the water, but the vanes and tops of the church steeples, with the sea-gulls and petrels perching on them.* So, you see, master, as soon as we come to anchor in the Zuid-vliet, and have our fore and aft canvas in the brails, my horses come from their stables, we run a hawser ahead, and thereby they tow the schooner through a little canal right into my own farm-yard, where my wife, my children, my house-dog—even the pigs, cocks and hens await and welcome us. There we load her, and victual the crew forward and the cabin aft, with the produce of my own land. My brother, who kept the Schiffer Huys on the shore of the Zuid-vliet, used to manage all that for me. But good Adrian is gone now—he died under strange and terrible circumstances, heaven rest him !”

The usually jolly Dutch captain emitted a sigh and a mighty puff of smoke together. He applied once more to a square case-bottle of schiedam, and then became silent—even sad.

“ Strange circumstances ?” said I, echoing his words ; “ may I inquire what they were ?”

“ Ugh, myn brooder ! I almost shudder when I think of them !”

My curiosity was naturally excited, and I added—

“ Was he drowned ?”

* This was in 1532.

“No, no—worse.”

“Killed?”

“I cannot say ; he died by my hand on that cabin floor ; and yet he did not, for he perished of a marsh fever ashore.”

I thought that the brain of Captain Jan Van Zeervogel was disordered, or at least was becoming affected by the contents of his bottle of schiedam ; but he resumed :

“Though I am not one who is much used to looking astern in the voyage of life, or back through the mists of time and memory, I will tell you this strange story, Mr. Rodney, as it happened to me.”

The captain carefully refilled the brown bowl of his large pipe, lit it with equal deliberation, and after a few whiffs, during which his keen grey eyes were bent on the cabin floor, he fixed them on the rudder case, and then commenced his tale.

CHAPTER III.

THE THREE WARNINGS.

"I MUST preface my story by telling you that my brother Adrian and I were twins, and possessed to the full that mysterious affinity and affection which are said to exist between those who are born thus. When Adrian's arm was broken by the sail of a windmill, I was cruising off the coast of Mexico, yet I was sensible of a shock and of a benumbed feeling in my right elbow, which puzzled the doctors for many days; yet it passed away as Adrian's hurt became well, and until my return home I knew not what had affected me.

"It happened also that when I was nearly drowned by falling from the foretopsail yard, in a dark night during a gale in the Pentland Firth, Adrian was almost choked in his sleep through dreaming that the dykes had broken, and that the waves were suffocating him. I merely mention these two instances out of many that occurred, to illustrate what I mean.

“Our brotherly love for each other was strong ; all the stronger, perhaps, because of this strange mystery, which we could neither account for nor escape from—nor had we the desire to do so.

“Well, I had been with this schooner on what we considered an unusually long voyage—so far as Bristol, with a cargo of my own grain, cheese, and apples. I sold them well, but failed to get a return freight ; and after being damaged in a gale, which forced us to run under a jury foremast into Havre de Grace for repairs, we bore up for home, and after a six months’ absence came to anchor, in a dark night, when the wind was blowing fresh, in the Zuid-vliet.

“We were close in shore—so close that I could see over the level land the light that burned in my own comfortable kitchen ; and long I remained on deck looking at it, for I knew that my dear wife and all our little ones were there, and that in the corner of the deep arched fireplace my brother Adrian would be smoking his long pipe, and giving our youngest boy, little Jan, a ride on his foot.

“They would be talking of me—of the schooner and her crew, who were all neighbours—little thinking we were so near them, and that our anchor had fast hold of the soil of Wolfersdyck.

“My heart yearned to join them ; but the hour was late, the night was dark, and there was a heavy

sea rolling round the point of North Beveland and meeting the East Scheldt, so there was such a swell, that every time the schooner's head was lifted I thought the chain cable would part, or we would drag our anchor.

"I abandoned all intention of going ashore for that night. I smoked a pipe, took a glass of schiedam, saw all made snug aloft and on deck, and read a chapter of the Bible to my crew. We returned thanks to Him who holds the great deep in the hollow of his hand for bringing us safely home—for we are pious in our own quiet way, we Dutch folks—and then, save the watch, we all turned in for the night.

"I had been asleep in the larboard berth, *there*, for about an hour, when I awoke suddenly with an undefinable sensation of terror, and the conviction that some one was in the cabin near me.

"‘Who is there?’ I called aloud ; but receiving no answer, and hearing only the creaking of the ship's timbers as she strained on the chain cable, and the gurgle of the sea alongside, I dropped asleep, but only to wake again with a start, a shiver, and the same conviction that *some one* was near me !

"Drawing back that little curtain on the brass rod, I looked out.

"Through the two little stern windows the moon was shining, but with sudden gleams of weird, wan

light, as the schooner rose and sunk on the long rollers of the heavy ground swell. The cabin lamp swung to and fro in the skylight ; thus I could see plainly enough the figure of a man clad like a Dutch peasant, standing near the table at which we are now seated, but I could not discern his features, as his back was towards me.

“My first thought was of thieves, and that some schelms from the shore had ventured on board, and overpowered the anchor watch.

“Snatching a cutlass from the cleat at the bulk-head, I sprang out of bed ; but at that moment the figure disappeared like a shadow !

“Surprised and disordered by this incident, I hastened on deck. All was still on board. The fore and aft canvas was tight in its brails ; the chain cable was taut as the schooner’s head lay to the slow deep current of the Scheldt ; the watch were walking to and fro ; the wind was yet blowing freshly, and the moon was on the wane behind the slender spires, the great wind-mills, and the flat dark shore of Beveland ; but I could see at Wolfersdyck the ruddy light that still shone from the window of my own farm-kitchen.

“At such a time this seemed strange. Why were they not all a-bed ?

“I looked at my watch. The hour was eleven ; so, believing that the figure I had seen was merely

the effect of fancy, I descended to the cabin, once more turned in, and fell asleep, the more readily that I had sniffed the night breeze, which came from the land and sea together.

“But I could not have been sleeping more than ten minutes when I awoke with a nervous start, and with the same undefinable sensation of terror. Again I looked into the cabin, and there, in the moonlight, stood the same man, or figure of a man, near the table !

“Anger now replaced my first emotion of alarm ; and starting from bed, I hurled an iron marlinspike at the person, exclaiming—

“‘Take *that*, whoever you are !’

“The man seemed to fall just as the light in the cabin-lamp sank low. I rushed towards him, and then, as his prostrate form turned slowly round, the dim light of the waning moon fell steadily through the cabin window on his face ; and oh, what saw I then ?

“The features of Adrian—of my brother—but pale, ghastly, pinched, and damp with the dews of death ; his eyes glazing with a terrible expression, of combined affection and *reproach*, as they met mine, and then the whole seemed to melt away ; the lamp went out, and the moonlight passed away too, as the schooner’s stern fell round with the *ebb* tide—the usual time of death.

"I was alone—alone in the dark cabin—with terror in my heart, and a cold perspiration on my brow.

"I rushed on deck. The light *still* burned in the kitchen window, but to me it seemed brighter than before.

"‘Lower the boat,’ I exclaimed, ‘for I must instantly go ashore. There is something wrong at home, lads.’

"Fortunately the sea and wind had gone down together, and we might venture to land safely now; thus the boat, with two men in her, was ready almost before I was dressed.

"I was soon ashore, and hastened to my own house, where, as none knew we were at anchor in the Zuid-vliet, my arrival was quite unexpected.

"I found my household astir—the rooms all lighted up as for a festival; but, alas, what a festival it was! My wife threw herself into my arms, and wept, and our red-cheeked little ones clung about me in their night dresses, as I was led to the room of my good brother Adrian, who was then in his death agony.

"‘Adrian,’ I exclaimed, throwing myself on my knees at his bedside, ‘tell me how fares it with you?’*

* This story is nearly similar to one which a friend related to me as having occurred in his own family not long ago.

“He turned his ghastly face towards me with the same expression of affection and reproach, which I had seen in the face of the vision in my cabin, and at that moment his last breath passed away ; the jaw fell, his head turned on one side, and a mortal pallor spread over his features.

“How such things come to pass I can no more say than where a hurricane begins, or where it *ends* ; I relate but the events as they happened.

“My brother was dead, and I became stupefied !

“I was afterwards told that a fatal fever had seized him, and that he had been given over by the doctor to the grim king at the very time we had come to anchor in the Zuid-vliet. On a further comparison of notes, we found that he had fallen into a trance at *each* time I had been awakened in my cabin ; and that at the moment I had thrown the marlinspike (you may see the mark of it there on the cabin floor), he had uttered my name with a cry of agony ; but Heaven rest him,” added the Captain, once more filling the bowl of his meerschaum, “he lies at rest now in the old burying-ground of Smouts Kerk.”

Soon after Captain Zeervogel concluded his narrative, I proposed to leave the schooner and return home ; but he said, that as he intended to sleep that night on board, and as the crew were all ashore,

he begged that I would have the kindness to remain in the cabin for a few minutes until he returned from the little tavern where they were located, as he had some orders to give.

"The tide will rise higher to-night than usual," he added. "I must have the schooner made more secure by additional warps, else there is no knowing what may happen."

I could not in courtesy refuse, though in no way disposed to remain in that gloomy little cabin, after the ghostly narrative I had just heard ; but he trimmed the lamp anew, as if to make the place more cheery, and, without waiting for an answer, went on deck. I heard him descend the side-ladder ; and, as he passed away, stumbling among the logs and chips of the little dockyard, I had the unpleasant conviction of being alone—alone in the confined scene of his wild story.

My watch told me it was now the time for supper and prayers at the Rectory, from which I had been too long absent. Then a vague emotion of alarm came over me, as I expected every instant to hear some unaccountable sound, or to see something that might terrify me ; so, to gather "Dutch courage," I very unwisely took one or two more of Captain Zeervogel's peaches, which, as already stated, were preserved in brandy, and consequently were more potent in effect than the spirit itself.

Dearly did I pay the penalty of that act of indiscretion !

I listened intently, but heard no sound indicative of the captain's return. Once, there seemed to come a cry from a distance. My head began to swim and my eyelids to droop. The fumes of Zeervogel's long pipe, which pervaded and made closer the atmosphere of the little cabin, together with the effect of the peaches, proved too much for me.

I started to reach the companion ladder and ascend on deck ; but my limbs seemed to become powerless—to yield under me, and I fell into a drowsy doze, with my head and arms on the cabin table.

The captain never returned ; and long after, I ascertained that the poor man had been knocked down by some unruly “navvies,” that the cry I heard had been his, that he had been robbed and left senseless in the street of the village, while I lay asleep in the cabin of the empty schooner, with the flood-tide rising rapidly about her.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW I GOT ADRIFT.

I HAD been asleep nearly four hours, when a fall on the cabin floor, as I slipped from the table, awoke me.

Stiff, cold, and benumbed, I started up, confused to find myself in the dark, and at first I knew not *where*.

I reeled and fell twice or thrice in efforts to keep my feet, for now the schooner was rolling from side to side—rolling and afloat!

“Home—let me hasten home,” was my first thought. I scrambled up the companion ladder and reached the deck, to find water around me on every side, while the schooner, being without ballast and light as a cork, lay almost on her beam ends, as she was careened by a heavy breeze that blew from the shore, the lights of which, probably Erlesmere, I could see about three miles distant.

A deadly terror filled my heart!

To swim so far was impossible ; I dared not leave the schooner, even with a spar or anything else that would float, as the wind and sea were evidently rising together, and to remain on board was almost as dangerous and hopeless. I had the risk of drowning by her capsizing, or lying on her beam-ends in the water, and so foundering and going down.

A plank might start in her sheathing—she might even then be filling by some uncaulked leak ! I had no idea of the state of her hold, and from many reasons feared she might sink before daybreak, and before my perilous situation could be discovered from the shore.

The waves were black as ink ; the sky was moonless overhead, but the pale, white stars winked and twinkled, and were reflected in the trough of the ocean. Now I could perceive foam cresting the tops of the waves, and knew that the breeze was increasing to a gale—a gale that was blowing *from* the land.

This added to my despair, for the lights I had seen soon disappeared, and the dark outline of the coast seemed to sink lower and to blend with the sea. Clutching the weather rigging, I could scarcely keep my feet, so slippery was the now wetted deck, and so cold and benumbed were my hands and arms by the chill atmosphere of the ocean, and by

the salt spray which ever and anon flew over me in bitter briny showers.

I shouted, but the mocking wind bore my voice away to seaward. With despairing eyes I swept the dusky water, in the hope of seeing a vessel, a fishing boat, or the light of a steamer near; but gazed, with haggard glance, in vain.

I had no hope now but to wait for dawn of day; and when it came, *where* might I and the empty schooner be? Fortunately, her topmasts were struck, her fore-yard was lowered, and all her gear made tolerably snug. Her canvas, however, was only in the brails, and a portion of the fore-and-aft foresail having got loose, it was swelled out by the blast, and kept her head partially before the wind, thus accelerating the rate at which she was borne *from* the land, and being without trimming or ballast, she danced over the waves, as I have said, like a cork, but in momentary danger of capsizing and foundering. As dawn drew near, the cold increased so much, that though at the risk of being passed unseen by some coaster, I was fain to creep on my hands and knees to the companion hatch, and descend into the cabin.

It was darker now than ever, for the lamp had gone out.

The memory of the captain's weird story made me shudder. His words, "I was lying in the lar-

board berth—*there*, on the cabin floor, I struck the figure down,” seemed ever in my ears, and the pale, spectral face he had portrayed, with the moon-beams streaming on its ghastly features and glazing eyes, were ever before me in the dark, filling my young heart with a chilling horror.

“Oh to be ashore !” I exclaimed passionately, with clasped hands ; “ashore, and free from this floating prison !”

I thought of my gentle and loving mother, and my soul seemed to die within me. The schooner would be missed by daybreak—the alarm would be given ; *her* alarm would rapidly become irrepres- sible anxiety, which would soon turn to a despair that nothing could alleviate.

Sounds like thunder, or like tremendous blows, at times made me start. These were caused by billets of wood, mallets, or pieces of pig-iron, pitching about in the hold of the schooner, as she rolled, and lurched, and righted herself, to roll and lurch again.

For a time I cowered miserably in the dark cabin, until my childish fears overmatched reason, and I crept once more upon deck.

A regular gale was blowing now, and the schooner careened fearfully beneath it on her starboard side, while the bellying of that portion of the fore-and-

aft foresail which had got loose aided in hurrying her faster out to sea.

The light of the coming day was spread in dull grey over the sky, imparting the same cold tint to the whitening waves. Land was still visible, but it seemed like a dark bank at the horizon. I supposed it to be about ten miles distant, but what part of the coast, or how far from Erlesmere, I knew not.

Now I began to be assailed by that illness, which terror and anxiety had hitherto but partially repressed — a violent sea-sickness in all its horror. Afraid of being washed from the deck, over which the waves were breaking now, once more I crept in wretchedness below.

Before descending, I cast a despairing glance at the loosening sail which still caught the wind ; it was a source of increasing danger which I dared not attempt to remedy, even had I strength to have done so, for the wet deck was now sloping like the roof of a house, and I would assuredly have fallen into the sea to leeward. After several feeble efforts, I succeeded in partially closing the companion hatch, for warmth and security, and descending, threw myself on the cabin floor, sick and despairing.

The lurching of the vessel, the closeness of the

atmosphere, and general odour of the cabin, overpowered me at last ; I became fearfully ill, and from being so, lapsed into unconsciousness, after enduring all the wretchedness induced by that ailment of the ocean. For the top of my head seemed about to fly off, its sides to be crushed in ; there was a singing in my ears, an ache in my eyeballs ; and then came that awful sinking of the pulses, of the body, of the soul itself, which thousands have endured in cases of aggravated sea-sickness, but none have been able to depict.

In short, after a paroxysm of illness and tears, I became totally unconscious of the peril and horror of my situation, and found a refuge in sleep.

CHAPTER V

U S E L E S S R E G R E T S .

I MUST have lain long thus. On recovering, I rose more stiff and more benumbed than ever, and with feeble steps ascended the companion ladder, and then a cry of despair escaped me.

The sky was clear and sunny, but whether with the light of a rising or a setting sun, I could not at first determine, morning and evening on the ocean being so much alike to an unpractised eye. Not a vestige of land was visible !

Sea and sky were around me ; not a sail was in sight, and nothing living was near, save a few petrels tripping over the water, alongside of the fatal schooner.

Had I slept all night, and was this the dawn of a new day ? Had I slept all day, and was this the approach of another night ? I devoutly hoped not, as I most dreaded night upon the ocean ; but the gradual sinking of the sun, and the increasing red-

ness of the sky, ere long informed me that the time was evening. I now knew the west, and turned my haggard eyes to the south, for there the land and my home lay; but still the envious wind, though lighter now, seemed to blow *from* that quarter.

Oh! how deeply and earnestly, by thoughts unuttered, I prayed in my heart that it would change and blow towards the shore—any shore—or any part of the coast of England, and bring me so near that I might have a chance of escape, of life and preservation by swimming—by putting to the test that skill and those powers of activity I had acquired at Eton, in the waters of the Thames.

The sea was comparatively smooth, but still the empty schooner rolled and lurched fearfully; the more so, that the fore-and-aft foresail was hanging so loosely in the brails.

A hundred years seemed to have elapsed since I had heard the dear voices and seen the loved faces of those I had left at home—of my father, my mother, of Dot, and of Sybil; while the events of my early schoolboy days seemed to have occurred but yesterday.

All time was chaos and confusion!

In my sorrow and despair, I never thought, unless with anger, of Jan van Zeervogel, the poor Dutch skipper, whose interests were so much in-

volved by the loss or safety of his little schooner, with which the flood-tide had made so free. I thought only of my own danger, and my mother's sorrow for the mystery that would overhang my fate.

Now hunger assailed me, creating a new terror lest I should perish by want of food ; and all I had read or heard of wrecks, rafts, and castaways crowded on my memory, to aggravate the real perils which surrounded me.

Once more I sought the cabin, and on finding an axe broke open what appeared to be a press or locker. Therein were several cups, bottles, and drinking glasses, placed in perforated shelves ; but nothing eatable save a single hard and mouldy biscuit, which the rats abandoned on my approach, and nothing drinkable save the remains of the brandy in which the peaches had been preserved—and I viewed the jar with horror, as the primary cause of all my sufferings and dangers ;—I say the remains, for it had fallen from the table and been broken to pieces ; so nothing remained of its contents, except about a gill in a fragment, and the peaches which lay in the lee or lower side of the cabin.

What would I not have given for a single drop of pure cold water, to alleviate that choking thirst which is ever the sequel to sickness, excitement, and sorrow ! But there was not a drop on board,

as the scuttle-butt had broken its lashings, in one of the lurches of the schooner, and fallen overboard to leeward. So I soaked the mouldy biscuit in the brandy, ate it, and went on deck, in time to see the sun set at the watery horizon, from whence he cast a long and tremulous line of yellow splendour along the dancing waves, to where the schooner floated in her loneliness.

Night followed, and one by one the stars appeared in the mighty blue dome overhead; there was no moon as yet, and I thought of hoisting a light at the mainmast head, but where were a lantern and matches to be found?

I thought also of lifting the fore-hatch, to explore the fore-part of the schooner, but I felt too feeble and sick at heart; and now with the gloom of night the ghost-story of the Dutch skipper recurred to me.

Thirst was now becoming an agony, and I inhaled the dewy atmosphere in vain, for its property was saline, and seemed to make my sufferings greater; but happily it induced a drowsiness. I crept below, and seeking the bed in the captain's berth, drew the clothes over me and strove to sleep—and so weary was I, that sleep came.

I had now been two nights and a day on board this fatal craft. My parents and my sisters—what would their thoughts, their fears, their sorrow be!

In my sleep their voices came to my ear, and I felt my mother's kiss upon my cheek so palpably, that I started and nearly awoke.

Then old Eton came before me, with its sombre brick quadrangles, its bronze statue of King Henry the Sixth; the ancient college, with its rich buttresses and carved pinnacles, and the great window, past which the Thames sweeps on to London, between its green and lovely banks.

The old monastic hall, and then the Playing Fields in all their sunny greenness, shaded by their solemn old elm trees, recurred to me; then the seclusion of the library where I had spent many an hour; then came the voices of my old companions at cricket, or shouting as they urged their trim-built skiffs, with the murmur of the river, the familiar toll of the chapel bell, and the voices of the choristers, all mingling in my dreaming ear, as with a "drowsy hum."

Anon, I seemed to hear the merry English chime of bells ringing in the old square tower of Erlesmere Rectory; but they sunk amid the hiss and gurgle of the bitter surf and the moan of the midnight sea.

Now, I thought, how rapturously I could have clasped my dear mother's neck! How gladly I would have obeyed my poor father and gone wherever he wished me—even to my uncle's dingy

counting-house in the City, there to spend the remainder of my existence, if fate so willed it, on a tripod stool, chin-deep among red-edged ledgers, invoices, telegrams, and dockets of papers.

I endeavoured to remember all my parents had taught me in their prayers and precepts, and how often I had been reminded by the good old Rector that without the knowledge of heaven not even a sparrow could fall to the ground; and I thought that surely I must be worth a whole army of sparrows.

From these dreams and ideas—I must have been half awake—I was roused by a violent lurch of the schooner.

On reaching the deck, I found that a gale had again come on, and that the sea was whitened with foam, amid which the sea birds were blown wildly hither and thither; that the moon was now on the wane, and shed a cold, weird light between the black masses of flying scud, upon the tumbling billows and the empty schooner, which yet floated buoyantly enough. But she now careened fearfully to port. I foresaw that unless the masts were cut away, a capsize was inevitable, for the wild wind howled over the waste of seething water, and the schooner groaned and trembled as wave after wave thundered on her empty and resounding hull.

Notwithstanding my weakness, I endeavoured to

tighten the brailing of the fore and aft foresail ; but how vain was the attempt ! The moment I removed the rope from the belaying pin, it was torn from my hand ; the whole sail fell heavily loose, and swelled out upon the wind. It flapped with a sound like thunder in the blast, and in a moment the deck seemed to pass from under my feet, and I was struggling alone in the midnight sea.

To the horror of being drowned was now added that of being devoured by the fishes.

A cry to heaven escaped me, as I rose panting and almost breathless, and struck out to prolong existence. The sea repelled and buoyed me up, for it is by no means so easy to sink as many persons imagine.

The schooner was lying now completely on her beam-ends to port ; her masts and half her deck were in the water. It had filled the belly of the loosened sail, and served to keep her steady ; but still the waves washed wildly over the hull. I knew she must soon fill and go down ; yet so strong is the instinct of self-preservation, that I soon reached the foremast, climbed into the now horizontal rigging, and seated myself on the row of dead-eyes, through which the shrouds are rove, clutching them with wild tenacity, while drenched, cold, and despairing.

The spray flew over me, thick as rain, but bitter, heavy, and blinding.

How long I could have survived, I know not ; but I felt as one in a dreadful dream, and acted with the decision and firmness with which we often seem to acquit ourselves amid the most fantastic situations created by the fancy in sleep.

Suddenly, amid the stupor that was coming over me, I heard a voice and saw a large brig looming between me and the pale waning moon. She was close by, with her courses, topsails, jib, and fore-and-aft mainsail set, but with her fore-yard laid to the wind as she lay to. Then I heard the rattle of the blocks and tackle as a boat descended from the stern davits with a splash into the sea.

"Cheerily, now, my lads, give way !" cried the voice I had heard before ; "pull to windward round this craft, and overhaul her."

"There's a man in the fore-rigging !" cried another.

"Then stand by in the bow with the boat-hook."

I strove to speak, to shout ; but my voice was gone.

"Spring into the sea," cried a voice ; "do you hear me, you sir—you in the fore-rigging there ? Jump in ; we cannot sheer alongside a craft that pitches about like a cork in such a sea as this."

"Don't fear, my lad," cried others ; "we'll pick you up."

But I was powerless, blinded by spray ; and

though unable to respond, clutched the rattlins with fatuous energy. Then strong hands were laid upon me, and I felt myself dragged into the boat.

“Shove off, shove off—give way ! this craft will sink in a minute,” cried some one ; “give way for the brig !” and just as they turned the head of the boat towards their vessel, the Dutch schooner appeared to right herself ; there was a crash as her deck burst up, and then a sob seemed to mingle with the air that was expelled from her hold as she filled and went down like a stone.

Though I had been so long unseen, I afterwards learned that at this time there were not less than fifteen sail in sight of the vessel which picked me up.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EUGENIE.

AFTER being conveyed on board, hot brandy punch was readily administered to me ; all my wet clothes were taken off, and I was put into a snug berth, the cosy warmth of which, together with the effect of the steaming punch—"a stiff nor'-wester," as I heard it called—and the toil and misery, mental and bodily, I had undergone, all conduced to give me a long and almost dreamless slumber. Thus the noon of the next day was far advanced before I awoke to the realities of life and a consideration of the awkward predicament in which I was placed.

I had been picked up by the *Eugenie*, a new brig of two hundred and fifty tons register, "coppered to the bends, and standing A 1 at Lloyds," as I was informed by Samuel Weston, her master. He added that she had a crew of twelve hands, men and boys, exclusive of Marc Hislop, the mate, and Tattooed Tom. his assistant, and that the brig had the reputa-

tion of being one of the best sailing vessels out of London.

The morning was fine and warm ; the skylight was open, and a pleasant current of air passed through the clean, wainscotted cabin. A spotless white cloth was on the table, across which there were lashed certain bars of wood, technically termed a fiddle, to keep the plates and glasses from falling to leeward ; and on looking from my curtained berth (for I was not permitted to rise), I saw the captain and mate at lunch over brandy and water, biscuits and cheese ; and busy the while with charts and compasses, as they were comparing their nautical notes and observations.

The brig seemed to be running steadily through the water upon the starboard tack, and I could hear the gurgle of the sea under her counter, as it bubbled away in the wake astern—in fact, the sound seemed to be just a foot above my ear, realizing the terrible idea that there was “only a plank between me and eternity.”

Captain Samuel Weston was a well-made man of the middle height, and somewhere about forty years of age. He was rather grave than jovial in manner, but pleasant, kind, and gentlemanly. There was nothing about him that particularly indicated the seaman, and he never used startling adjectives, or according to the proverbial idea inter-

larded his conversation with obscure nautical phraseology.

He wore a short pea-coat with brass buttons, and a straw hat. A handsome gold ring secured his necktie, and the fag-end of a cheroot was between his teeth. He was exactly portrayed thus in his coloured calotype, which was framed and screwed into the bulkhead. Close by it was another of a lady, with a little boy, standing at the base of a column, which of course had a crimson curtain festooned behind it; and they, I had no doubt, were his wife and child. So Captain Samuel—or as he preferred to call himself—Sam Weston was more domestic in his tastes than those who usually live by salt water are supposed to be.

Neither was there anything particularly nautical in the appearance of the mate, who was a smart and athletic young fellow, about five-and-twenty years of age, with somewhat of a Glasgow accent, keen grey eyes, and sandy-coloured hair; and he it was (though I was not aware of it then, or for long after) who boldly plunged into the stormy sea, and swam to the foundering schooner, and finding that I could neither understand nor obey his instructions, had made a line fast to my waist, and thus conveyed me safely into the boat; so to this young Scotsman I owed my life and a debt of gratitude.

On perceiving that I was awake, a hand-bell was

rung by the captain, and hot coffee, accompanied by the last slice of the shore-bread that remained, was brought to me by Billy, the cabin-boy ; and then, after a time, I was requested to state what craft that was from which I had been taken, my name, and so forth, that Mr. Hislop might enter all the particulars among the "remarks" in his log-book.

I soon satisfied them as to all this.

"And where am I now?" I inquired.

"Pretty far out upon the open sea, my lad," replied the captain, with a smile, as he threw the end of his cheroot into the empty grate.

"The open sea—*still* the open sea!" I reiterated, with dismay, which I cared not to conceal.

"Yes ; we saw the last glimpse of the rugged Start on the day before yesterday, and this morning, just an hour before picking you up, we bade good-bye to old England, for the Lizard Light was bearing—you had the deck watch, Hislop ; how did it bear?"

"About twelve miles off, on the weather quarter."

"How shall I return home?"

They both laughed as I despairingly made this inquiry.

"By the way you left it, I suppose ; that is, by water," said Captain Weston.

"You spoke of the Start ; what is that?"

"A cape of the Channel, on the south-east coast of Devonshire, about nine miles to the southward of Dartmouth," he replied, while casting a casual glance at a chart which lay on the table.

I had thus, before being rescued so providentially, drifted more than a hundred miles from Erlesmere, and it was marvellous that the schooner had floated so far unseen.

"That lubberly old Dutchman, Zeervogel, should have made his craft secure, by mooring her so that the flood-tide could not have floated her off shore. But," added the captain, laughing, "he may have a clear case of barratry against you, if you ever return to England."

"Barratry—what is that?" I asked, with a bewildered air.

"A landshark's phrase for running away with a ship—carrying her out of her course—sinking or deserting her; or doing anything by which she may be arrested, detained, or lost."

"But the schooner ran away with me."

"And the sea with you both. Well, what is to be done now? We are bound for the West Indies, but we may put you aboard the first craft that passes us, homeward-bound; or you are free to remain, if we cannot do better for you."

I thought of my mother, of my father, my two sisters; and my heart was so full of gratitude to

Heaven for preserving me to the end, that I might see and embrace them all again, that I had not words to reply. After a time I exclaimed—

“Homè, home!—let me go home to Erlesmere!”—weeping as I spoke, for the thought of them all made me a very child again.

The captain and mate exchanged glances of inquiry.

“It’s no use piping your eye now, my lad,” said the former, coming towards my berth; “but answer me quietly. You said that your name was Rodney?”

“Yes.”

“And you spoke of Erlesmere; are you a son of old Dr. Rodney, the rector?”

“Do you know my father, then?” I exclaimed.

“Can’t say exactly that I have the honour of being known to him; but I know *of* him, right well. Why, Master Rodney, I have sailed your uncle’s ships many a time, and know his gloomy old office in the City as well as the buoy at the Nore; so you are as safe and as welcome aboard the *Eugenie* as if in the old Rectory-house at home.”

This was pleasant intelligence, at all events; but my earnest desire was to return—a design which was not fated to be speedily gratified.

“The pain which is first felt when the infant branch is first torn from the parent tree,” says

Southey, in a passage of great beauty, "is one of the most poignant we have to endure through life; there are other griefs which wound more deeply, which leave behind them scars never to be effaced, which bruise the spirit and sometimes break the heart,—but never, never do we feel so much the want of love, and the keen necessity of being loved, as when we are *first* launched from the haven of our boyhood, into the wide and stormy sea of life!"

I felt the *wrench* of this separation in all its intensity for a time, and longed for the means of returning home; but for several days we passed only outward bound vessels, or others which were at such a distance that the task of signalling and speaking with them would have delayed the *Eugenie* longer than Captain Weston could risk. Two that passed near us, when we showed our ensign, replied by displaying the tricolor of France or the red and yellow bars of Spain; so there was nothing for me now but to remain contentedly on board the *Eugenie*, which was bound for Matanzas with a solid cargo of steam machinery and coal.

The master had no doubt of getting a return freight direct for London; thus six or eight months might elapse before I could return to Erlesmere.

My wardrobe was now in the most deplorable condition; but Weston and Hislop, the first mate, kindly supplied me with all that was requisite—

“clothes and shirts, for running rigging,” as the latter said, “with twenty sovereigns for mainstays, which were sure to be well kept, as we were on board ship.”

I gradually became reconciled to the novelty of my situation ; I looked forward hopefully to the time when the sorrow of those I had left behind would be alleviated, and began to enjoy to the utmost the prospect of a voyage in a spanking brig to the shores of Cuba.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SCOTCH MATE'S YARN.

COULD I have anticipated all that was still before me, in the form of suffering and of peril—suffering enough to shatter a stronger frame and shake a stouter heart than mine—I would have returned in any vessel bound for any part of Europe, and trusted to Providence for the means of again reaching home, rather than have remained in the *Eugenie*.

But who can lift the veil which so happily hides the future from us?

So I turned my thoughts toward the West Indies with pleasure ; I resolved not to be an idler or loblolly boy, and was allowed by Captain Weston to take my watches and share of deck duty with the rest of the crew ; and at intervals I worked hard at a Spanish grammar with Marc Hislop, who could read *Don Quixote* in the original, with a fluency that even my old tutor at Eton might have envied.

We were now clear of the Channel ; and, after a hard battle with the wind and sea, we felt the long roll of the mighty Atlantic.

On the third night after my rescue we encountered dark and cloudy weather, with a strong gale, which set all the cabin afloat. My watch was over, and I had just turned in, when I heard the voice of Captain Weston, who was on deck, shouting through his trumpet to "close reef the maintopsail, hand the mainsail, foresail, and foretopsail. Look alive there, lads," he added, "or as sure as my name is Sam Weston, I'll give the colt to the last man off the deck !"

This threat, so unusual in one so goodnatured, together with the bellowing of the wind, the flapping of the wetted canvas, the rattle of the blocks and cordage, and the labouring of the brig, which was so deeply laden that every timber groaned, all gave such indications of a rough night, that I sprang from my berth, and proceeded to dress again in haste.

To my astonishment, at that moment I heard the hoarse rattle of the chain cable, as it rushed with a roaring sound through the iron mouth of the hawse-hole ; then I was sensible of a violent shock, which made the brig stagger, and tumbled me headlong against the panelled bulk-head which separated the cabin from the after-hold.

Hislop, who had been dozing on the cabin locker in his storm jacket, started up with alarm in his face.

"Have we come to anchor?" I asked.

"Anchor in more than three hundred fathoms of water?" he exclaimed, as he rushed on deck, whither I followed, and found that a very strange incident had occurred.

In the murky obscurity of the stormy night, a large Dutch lugger, in ballast apparently, and running right before the wind, with steering canvas set, came suddenly athwart us, and hooked the anchor from the cathead on our larboard bow—by some unwonted neglect it was not yet on board, nor had the cable been unbent—with her starboard fore-rigging, and thus bore away with it, until the chain came *to bear*, when there was a tremendous shock. Several feet of our bulwark were torn away, and two seamen, Tattooed Tom, and an old mân-o'-war's man named Roberts, were nearly swept into the sea, where, in such a night, and amid the confusion of such an incident, they would inevitably have perished unaided.

Then we heard a shout, mingled with a crash upon the bellowing wind, as the Dutchman's foremast snapped by the board, and then, fortunately, our anchor tumbled from his side into the sea, where it swung at the whole length of the chain cable.

We manned both windlass and capstan—got the anchor, which was drifting, roused to the cathead, hoisted it on board, unbent the cable, and stowed it in the tier ; but long ere all this was done, we had lost sight of our lubberly friend, who, when last seen, was tossing about like a log in the darkness, and drifting far astern of us. But for some defect in the pawls and notches of the windlass collar, I am doubtful if the chain would have run out so freely ; but as to this I cannot say.

We had hard squalls and a sea that ran high until daybreak ; there was lightning too ; red and dusky, it seemed at times to fill the whole horizon. We could see for an instant the black summits of the waves as they rose and fell between us and the glare ; and when it passed away, all again would be obscurity and gloom.

“More canvas must be taken off the brig, sir,” suggested Hislop, looking aloft and then over the side, where the foam-flecked sea whirled past us.

“Well, in with the trysail, foretopsail, and maintopsail,” ordered Weston.

As the light of dawn stole over the angry sea, through clouds of mingled mist and rain, the gale abated, and all but the watch went below.

“That lugger making off with our anchor,” said Hislop, “reminds me of how, after we failed to run off with a whale, he fairly ran off with us.”

"How?" said I, my teeth chattering as I tucked myself into bed again.

"You must know, that about ten years ago I was an apprentice aboard a small whaler, a ninety-ton schooner, out of Peterhead. We were returning in very low spirits after an unsuccessful voyage, and, by stress of weather, were forced towards the rocky and dangerous coast of Norway, where we came to anchor one evening in a solitary bay, among the rugged islets which stud the mouth of the Hardanger-fiord, to repair some trifling damages. As day broke, there was a shout raised by the watch on deck.

" 'A whale!—a whale!—in the shoal water!'

"And there, sure enough, far up the bay, we saw one sporting and gambolling, blowing and diving; and though it was a kind of robbery, perhaps, we resolved to make a dash at him, for the place was lonely, and not a Norwegian eye upon us—not a house upon the shore, nor a man upon the mountains, so far as we could discern by our glasses.

"The boats were cleared, the harpoons prepared, the lines were coiled away in the tubs, and the schooner was hove short on her anchor; but just as we lowered the whaling-punts, down dived our fish, tail uppermost, and then we knew that he was searching for his favourite food, of which plenty is to be found in these Norwegian fiords."

"What is it?" said I.

"A kind of small salt-water snail, and the *medusa*, or sea-blubber. As you have been at Eton, you must have read all about it in *Linnaeus*," continued our learned Scotch mate. "Just as the first boat was lowered, the schooner received a shock so violent that her masts strained almost to snapping; her bows were dragged downward, till her billet-head dipped in the water, and everything and everybody on deck went toppling and tumbling forward in a heap about the windlass bitts. Then a shower of bloody spray fell over us as the craft righted again, but with such violence that the water splashed under the counter and over the quarter. Then she was torn through the sea at the rate of thirty knots an hour!

"We had scarcely time to form an idea, or to utter an exclamation, either of surprise or fear, when we saw, a cable's length right ahead, an immense whale, the same fish we were preparing to attack, rushing through the waves with railway speed, and dragging us after him by our anchor, of the flukes of which he had somehow run foul in his gambols down below."

"What! do you mean to say that the whale ran off with the schooner?" I exclaimed, in astonishment.

"Just as a scared dog runs away with a kettle at

his tail. It was one of the blunt-headed cachalots, about sixty feet long. They are the most hideous fish of the whole whale species, having a head that is enormously thick, and one-third of their entire size, the spout-hole being at the fore end of it.

"In less time than I have taken to tell you all this, we were dragged out of the fiord ; its rocks of black basalt and its sombre pine woods lessened astern ; its entrance seemed to close like a gate as it blended with the coast ; and the schooner, with her loose foretopsail all aback against the mast, was dragged in the wind's eye (whales usually swim so) for more than twenty miles out to sea. Then the cachalot raised its mighty head about ten feet from the water, spouted a jet of froth into the air, and disappearing, sunk, leaving our anchor swinging or drifting in the deep water at the full length of the chain cable."

"And how came all this about?" I asked dubiously.

"Incredible as it may appear, this monstrous cachalot, while running along the sandy bottom of the bay, with mouth distended, in search of sea blubber, had by some means uprooted our anchor, though five hundred weight, by his nether jaw, and so carried it off with eighty fathoms of cable, and is at the other end of it. And now, Dick Rodney, what do you think of *that* for a yarn?"

"I think with Polonius, in *Hamlet*," said I, yawning, and turning wearily in my berth, through the yolk or bull's-eye of which the grey light of day was now struggling.

"That it is very like a whale, eh?"

"Yes."

"And so do I," said Hislop, laughing; "but though a close laid yarn, it is a true one, nevertheless."

CHAPTER VIII.

VOYAGE CONTINUED.

I FOUND the captain and mate of the *Eugenie* both pleasant and instructive companions.

The latter, like the generality of his countrymen, was well educated ; he was tolerably read in classical lore, and knew all the current literature of the day ; thus his little state-room was so crammed with books, that he had scarcely room to move in it. Like many other Scotchmen of humble birth or limited means, Marc Hislop had educated himself, beyond what schools or teachers could have done. Though usually quiet in disposition, he was sometimes impatient, and more than once I have seen him snatch from his pocket a colt (a piece of knotted rope eighteen inches long) for the special benefit of the ship-boys, of whom we had three on board.

He was so learned on the theory and law of storms, with the practical exposition thereof, and

could talk so fluently about straight, circular, and parallel winds, storm-waves, and storm-focuses, the height of a cyclone, and speed of a hurricane, that honest Sam Weston, the captain, and Tom Lambourne the second mate, wondered what it was all about ; as they had weathered many a gale without ever caring a jot about the theory or law of them, or without ever troubling their brains about where the wind came from, and still less about where it *went to*.

Among other things, Hislop had a photographic apparatus, by which he took the aspect of the sea by moonlight and daylight, and all our likenesses, in groups or otherwise. Tattooed Tom Lambourne, who had once been adrift in the bush somewhere, and been decorated with certain ineffaceable marks by the natives, came out famously in these artistic efforts, as he was all over stripes, like a zebra or a New Zealander.

Calm weather and heavy rains succeeded the gale I have mentioned ; but the *Eugenie* steadily kept her course, and two days after, when spanking along before a fine topgallant breeze, we picked up a bottle, which was descried by the watch, floating and bobbing in the water a few fathoms distant from the brig. She was at once hove in the wind, and Hislop went in the stern-boat to bring the bottle on board.

As the most trivial incident becomes of interest on board of ship, where the daily occurrences are so few, and the circle of society so limited, considerable concern was excited by the appearance of this bottle, which seemed to have been freshly corked ; and on its being broken, we found a scrap of paper—torn apparently from a note-book—whereon a hurried and agitated hand had pencilled this brief notice :—

“The *Mary*, clipper ship, of Boston, 20th Nov., 1861, momentarily expected to go down—pumps worn out, and the leaks gaining—Captain and first mate, with *all* the boats, washed away—God help us !”

“The 20th of November ? It was on that night we encountered the heavy gale,” said Weston.

We had been on the *skirt* of the tempest, as Hislop maintained, while the Yankee ship had probably suffered all the fury of it. From the main-cross-trees Captain Weston swept the sea with his telescope, in vain, for any trace of her ; so if that melancholy scrap of paper told truth, all was doubtless over long since with the *Mary* and her crew.

In the cabin that night, a conversation on the probabilities of her destruction or escape, led to a recurrence to the miraculous manner in which the unlucky Dutch schooner had floated so long with me ; and I mentioned to Weston and Hislop the additional terrors I had endured by the effect of

imagination, and a recollection of the strange incidents told me by Captain Zeervogel ; but they ridiculed the story of the poor man, chiefly, I thought, because "it was the yarn of a Hollander."

"Though I am a Scotchman," began Hislop——

"And come of a people naturally superstitious," suggested Weston, parenthetically——

"As all large-brained races are," retorted the mate, while filling his clay pipe with tobacco.

"Well, what were you about to say?" asked Weston. "But first fill your glass and pass over the tobacco bag."

"I was simply about to reiterate that I don't believe in ghosts, or value them any more than I do the Yankee sea-serpent, a rope's end, or a piece of old junk ; I never saw one, or knew a man who had seen one ; but every one has heard of a man, that knew *another* man who saw, or believed he saw a ghost. It is at variance with the laws of nature, which are so ordered that no such erratic spirit can be."

"I don't know that," replied Weston ; "earth and water have their inhabitants, so why not the air also ?"

"And why not the fire ?"

"There you go, right before the wind into the troubled sea of argument—you Scotchmen are all alike."

"Ghosts are at variance with the workings of Divine wisdom, and we all know what Jones of Nayland says thereupon."

"No we don't," said Weston ; "who the deuce was *he*—what port did he hail from?"

"He who cannot see the workings of a Divine wisdom in the order of the heavens, the change of the seasons, the flowing of the tides, the operations of the wind and other elements, the structure of the human body, the circulation of the blood, the instinct of beasts, and the growth of plants, is sot-tishly blind and unworthy the name of man."

"You hear him, Mr. Rodney," said Weston ; "now he has got both his anchor and topsails a-trip ; he can pay out whole speeches in this fashion, all at a breath, as fast as the chain-cable running through the hawse-pipe."

Being fresh from Eton, I was not going to let our learned Scotch mate have it all his own way, when Weston resumed,

"If you will listen, you shall hear a strange story in which I bore a prominent part."

"As the ghost?" said I.

"No ; but you will soon acknowledge whether or not I had cause for fear."

And after he had replenished his glass and pipe, Captain Sam Weston began in this manner :

"About fifteen years ago, I found myself at

Matanzas, in Cuba, the same port we are bound for now—adrift, without a ship, and almost without a penny in my pocket, among foreigners, Spaniards, and mulattoes, mestees and quadroons, black, white, and yellow. I had gone there as second mate of a ship from Boston, but the tyranny of our skipper well nigh drove me mad. During the voyage he had nearly killed three of our men for being slow in sending down the top-gallant yards on a squally night. He beat them till they were black and blue with a handspike, and kept them for forty-eight hours, lashed to ringbolts in the lee-scuppers, that the sea might break over them, as he said, and cure their sores.

“When I interferred to save a poor cabin boy, whom he had hung by the heels from the main-boom, and was scourging with a heavy colt till his back was covered with blood, he produced a bowie knife and revolver, threatening to ‘shoot or rip me up.’

“Just at that moment we were passing a Spanish ship of war which was at anchor in the bay, about half a mile from us, and had the red and yellow jack of Castile and Leon flying at his gaff peak. One of the poor fellows who had been so severely beaten was then in the foretop, so I hailed him to make a signal of distress to the Spaniard.

“In a moment his blue shirt was off and placed

on the lift of the foreyard. This meant, Mr. Rodney, that as merchant seamen we appealed to the man-o'-war for protection, and wanted an armed boat's crew. Thank Heaven, such an appeal is never made in vain by a poor Jack of any country to a British man-o'-war; but the lubberly Spaniards never noticed the signal, or if so, never heeded it.

"The Yankee skipper uttered a fierce laugh.

"'Douse that shirt and come down, you sir,' he thundered out; 'down instantly, or I will shoot you like a coon.'

"But, desperate with fear, the poor fellow now stood upon the yard, and while one hand grasped the topping lift, with the other he waved his shirt to the Spaniards. I heard the crack of a pistol, and next moment he fell a quivering mass upon the deck, stone dead, shot by the revolver.

"'That will teach you to make signals from my ship, you varmint,' snivelled the merciless skipper, giving the body a kick; 'and as for *you*,' he continued, addressing me, and ramming home his words with an oath; but before he could get further, I levelled him on the deck by a blow from a handspike, and tossed his knife and revolver overboard.

"His right arm was broken. There was a great row about all this before the Alcalde when we got

into harbour ; our bell was unshipped and our canvas unbent by a party of Spanish marines ; but the captain crossed the Alcalde's hand with silver or gold, and there was an end of it. There was an end of my engagement too ; for the Yankee weathered me about my salary, seized my chest, my quadrant, even an old silver watch which my mother gave me to make me comfortable, when I first went to sea, and then turned me out of the ship.

“So with nothing except a Mexican dollar in my pocket, but followed by my Newfoundland dog Hector, I found myself on a wet and dusky evening on the great quay of Matanzas, which faces the bay that opens into the Gulf of Florida.

“Low alike in spirit and funds, I had to endure being jostled by negro porters, scowled at by alguazils, ordered about by redcapped and black-bearded Spanish sentries, who were shirtless and tattered, and whose brown uniforms and red worsted epaulettes tainted the very sea-breeze with the odour of garlic and coarse tobacco.

“The sun had set behind clouds as red as blood. The bay was all of a deep brown tint, and the shores were black or purple. I was very sad at heart, and thought it hard that I, a British seaman, should be there an outcast, and all my kit reduced to the clothes on my back, in the very place where the same flag that Pococke and Albemarle hoisted

on Havannah, had brought all the Don Spaniards on their knees in old King George's time.

"However, that would neither find me supper or a bed. I lost or missed my Newfoundland dog Hector, and in the bitterness of my heart I banned the poor animal for ingratitude in leaving me. Just as I was looking about for a humble posada, where a moiety of my dollar might procure me a bed, a man stumbled against me.

"‘Look alive, cucumber shanks,’ said he, angrily, in English.

"‘Do you take me for a negro?’ I asked, fiercely.

"‘You are grimy enough for anything,’ said he; and after being a night in the Alcalde's lock-up house, I certainly was not the cleanest of men; but now it seemed as if the voice of the stranger was familiar to me. I examined his features.

"‘What,’ I exclaimed, ‘Hislop—Jack Hislop, is this you?’

"‘’Tis I, Jack Hislop, certainly,’ replied the other, who proved to be my old friend, Marc's father; ‘but who the deuce are you?’

"Your old shipmate, Sam Weston, who sailed with you for many a day in the *Good Intent* of Port Glasgow.’

"‘For a moment his tongue seemed absent without leave.

"‘What, you Sam Weston—English Sam, as we

called you—adrift here at Matanzas among these Spanish land-crabs ?

“ ‘Aye, adrift sure enough,’ said I, as we shook hands heartily, and then adjourned to a taberna, when I told him all about my quarrel with the Yankee and my present hopeless condition, over a glass of nor’-nor’-west.

“ ‘I have a brig here on the gridiron, repairing, for we lost some of her copper in scraping a rock near the Tortugas shoal. All my crew are of course ashore, and at present I am residing with a friend,’ said Hislop ; ‘but I can find permanent quarters for you till you get a berth. Do you see that craft out there in the bay ?’

“ ‘The polacca brig, about a mile off ?’

“ ‘Yes. Well, she is consigned to my owner, but was found adrift, abandoned by all her crew except two, about fifty miles off, half way between this and the Salt Key Bank. I have charge of her now, and there you may sleep every night if you choose. What say you to that ?’

“ ‘That I thank you, old shipmate, with all my heart, but—but—’

“ ‘What ?’

“ ‘I have heard of that polacca, and that the two of her crew who remained on board—’

“ ‘Were dead ; yes, true enough. They were found in their berths, one on the starboard and the other

on the port side of the cabin. But what of that ? I buried them off the point of Santa Cruz, and there they sleep sound enough, believe me, each with a couple of cold shot at his heels. Here is the key of the companion hatch, and take my revolver with you, for picaros are pretty common hereabout.'

" 'Thanks, Hislop,' said I ; 'but how am I to get on board ?'

" 'Scull over to her in the punt that is moored beside the quay. When on board make yourself quite at home, for the agent and I left plenty of grog, beef, biscuits, and tobacco in the cabin. On the morrow I'll overhaul you, in the forenoon watch. Till then, good-bye ;' and before I could say anything more, old Jack was gone, and I found myself alone on the stone mole, with the key of the polacca's companion in my hand.

" There seemed nothing for me but to accept the temporary home thus offered ; so, in the hope that it might lead to something better, I stepped into the light punt, cast loose the painter, and after a few minutes' vigorous sculling found myself on the lonely deck of the silent polacca.

" Her canvas was unbent ; most of the running rigging had also been taken off her and stowed away, —so her tall and taper spars stood nakedly up from the straight flush deck, with a sharp rake aft.

" Thick banks of dark-blue cloud were coming

heavily up from the Gulf of Florida. The air was hot and sulphureous ; some drops of rain, warm, and broad as doubloons, began to plash upon the deck and to make circles on the sea ; while at the far edge of the horizon a narrow streak of bright moonlight, against which the waves were seen chasing each other, glittered through the flying scud, the bottom of which was uplifted in the offing, like a dark curtain that was tattered and rent.

“ Then a flash of red lightning, tipping the waves with fire, shone, but to be replaced by instant darkness, and all became black chaos to seaward, save where a pale green beacon burned steadily at Santa Cruz, on the western side of the bay.

“ These signs prognosticated a rough night, but I was glad to perceive that the polacca was well moored at stem and stern ; so I unlocked the companion door and descended, not without a shudder, into the dark and cold cabin, where the dead men had been found, and where all was silence and gloom.

“ I struck a lucifer match ; my teeth chattered ; and while groping about for a candle, to make myself comfortable for the night, I began to wish I had remained on shore.

“ I found a ship-lantern with the fag-end of a candle in it, and this, when lighted, enabled me to take a survey of the cabin ; but I first applied to

the jar of right Jamaica which stood on the table ; and when looking about, found my eyes wander so incessantly to the side berths in which the dead Spaniards had been found, that at last I almost fancied their pale sharp profiles and rigid figures were visible in the flickering light of the candle.

“ ‘ Come,’ said I, ‘ Sam Weston—this will never do ! Are you a man, or have you become a child again ?’

“ Another application—a long one, too—to the rum jar, and I wrapped some bunting, a rug, and a pea-jacket that lay on the locker, round me, and lay down on the cabin floor to sleep ; and scarcely had I stretched myself there when the candle flared up, and, after casting some strange kaleidoscopic figures on the beams overhead, through the perforated lantern top—*went out !*

“ I was in total darkness now, but more awake than ever.

“ I felt as if in a great floating coffin, but heard no sound except the gurgle of the sea under the counter, or the splash of the stern warp, as it whipped the water occasionally.

“ I kept my eyes closed resolutely, and determined, perforce, to sleep, and not to wake till morning ; but still I could not help thinking of the two poor fellows who had died in the berths of that cold, dark, and silent cabin, and been tossed to and

fro so long upon the sea before they received Christian burial.

“Which had died first—the man in the larboard, or he in the starboard berth? Why were they thus abandoned? What had they said to each other? What messages had they sent to wife, to father, or mother? What tale of love to repeat—of guilt to reveal?—messages given by the dead to the dead, and never delivered!

“These thoughts crowded upon me till I almost imagined the dead men lay there still, and that they might rise and give their last messages to *me*.

“Then I heard a sound in the forehold. It made my blood curdle! Was it caused by rats? Perhaps they had fed on the dead Spaniards, and now were come to take a nibble at me. Rats were bad enough, but ghosts were worse. I took a third and last pull at the Jamaica jar; said my prayers over again, with more than usual devotion, adding thereto the wish that I should soon have a spanking craft of my own.

“Still the idea of the two dead men, with their pale faces and unclosed eyes, *would* come before me again and again; and I could have groaned but for dread of some similar response that might make my heart wither up and my flesh creep. And creep it soon did; for, just as this horrid idea of an overstrained fancy, fostered by imagination and fashioned

out of the silence and darkness, became strongest within me, what were my emotions—how painful the throbbings of my heart—on beholding a strange, green, ghastly light glimmering about, and playing *within* each of the side berths!

“While shrinking into a corner of the cabin, with eyeballs straining, I gazed at them alternately with a species of horrid fascination. The two lights were weird, wavering, and pale; they seemed to me as *two* warnings from the land of spirits, for they played upon the curtains and *in* the recess of each berth, port and starboard, in which a dead man had been found. And while these lights shone, there came upon my ear the palpable sound of a heavy breathing and snorting, as from the oppressed chest of some one close by me.

“I placed my hands upon my eyes and on my ears, to shut out these horrid lights and sounds; but when I looked again the former had disappeared, and all was opaque darkness.

“On putting forth my hand to rise, a cry of uncontrollable terror escaped me—a yell that rang in wild echoes through the silent polacca—when my fingers came in contact with something icy, and then a cold, clammy, and wet head of hair!

“Then two glistening eyes seemed to peer and to glare into mine!

“In horror and bewilderment, and followed by

something, I knew not what, I sprang up the companion, and, half fainting, reached the deck of the polacca. Then I turned to find that the object which had excited so much dismay was no other than my poor dog Hector, which had swam off to the brig in pursuit of me.

"The eyes that in the dark seemed to glare into mine, were his; the icy object, from which my fingers shrunk, was his honest black nose; and what seemed a wet head of hair, was his own curly front; while the lights—the mysterious lambent lights—that had flickered about the dead men's berths, proved to be nothing more than the green beacon on the promontory of Santa Cruz, which shone at times through the two stern windows of the polacca.

"Being moored with the chain cable ahead, and a manilla warp from her port quarter to a buoy astern, she swung to and fro a little with the ebb and flow of the tide; hence the oscillation which caused the moving gleams that terrified me.

" 'Ha! ha!' said I, on descending into the cabin, a wiser and a more sleepy man, 'scared by my own dog Hector! I have been as great a gull as ever touched salt water.'

"A fortnight afterwards, I shipped with old Jack Hislop as second mate, and the fifteenth day saw us running before a smart topgallant breeze

into the Gulf of Florida, bound with a cargo of rum, sugar, and molasses for the Clyde.

“So that is my ghost yarn. It conveys a moral, does it not? Order them to strike the bell forward. Hislop, call the watch; see how her head bears, and let us turn in.”

CHAPTER IX.

A HURRICANE DRIVES US TO THE FORTUNATE ISLES.

SOME days after this we passed a carraca, as the Portuguese name those large and round-built vessels which they send to Brazil and the Indies, and which are alike adapted for burden, fighting, and sailing.

On exchanging the bearings—which, when vessels pass each other, are usually chalked on a black board hung over the quarter—Weston and Hislop found a considerable difference between the Portuguese and ours; but never doubting that we were correct, they bore on without hailing the carraca, as we passed each other on opposite tacks under a press of sail.

The weather continued cloudy, and an increased difference was found on exchanging the latitude and longitude with another vessel next morning. Then, after an observation at noon, Weston found that for more than fifty hours the *Eugenie* had been

going several miles to the south-east of her due course.

The compass was immediately overhauled by Hislop, who found that the standard of the needle was *loose*.

On that night there commenced a long course of head winds and foul weather, during which the compass never worked properly, and the captain and mate found, by the first solar observation, that we had drifted so far to leeward as to be somewhere between the parallels of 28° and $28^{\circ} 35'$ north.

Tattooed Tom and old Roberts, the man-o'-war's-man, were superstitious enough to give *me* the entire blame of all this, in consequence of having fired one day at some of Mother Cary's chickens; an action, they averred, which never failed to give the craft of the perpetrator a head wind for the remainder of her voyage—if she ever finished it at all.

"If this foul weather holds for another day," said Weston, as he trod the deck with a sulkiness quite professional under the circumstances, "we shall see land sooner than I wished."

"Land!" I reiterated, brightening at the idea more than he relished.

"Yes, some part of the Canaries—Santa Cruz de la Palma, most likely; but we shall have very rough weather before another sun rises. I know

well the signs, Mr. Rodney. Don't you see what is brewing yonder, Hislop?" he said in a low voice to his mate.

"You say just what old Roberts, Tattooed Tom, and I were observing forward," replied Hislop. "We have not all of us seen a hurricane off the west coast of Africa, a tornado in the Windward Isles, and a regular roaring pampero off the Rio de la Plata, without learning something—eh, Captain?"

"I hope not; so remember that this gloomy weather, with the wind lulling away and then coming again in hot gusts, with a *moaning* sound—in my part of England we name it 'the calling of the sea'—are always signs of a coming squall."

As the night closed in, the canvas on the brig was reduced; the royals were struck and the yards sent on deck; the dead lights were shipped on the stern windows; the quarter boat was hoisted within the taffrail, and there lashed hard and fast, for there were increasing tokens of a coming tempest, and ere midnight it came with a vengeance.

The sky at first was all a deep dark blue, wonderfully dark for that region, and the stars, especially the planets, shone with singular clearness and beauty; but in the north-west quarter of the heavens we could see the coming blast.

From the horizon to the zenith, there arose with terrible rapidity a mighty bank of sable cloud,

forming a vast and gloomy arch, at the base of which a pale and phosphorescent light seemed to play upon the heaving sea.

This light brightened and sunk alternately. Now it would shoot downward with a lurid glare, steadily and brilliantly, under the flying vapour, and then it died away with an opal tint.

Sheet lightning, of a pale and ghastly green, extending over ten or twelve points of the horizon, flashed and played upon it. Then we heard the rush of rain, as if a great lake had been falling from a vast height into the sea, and next the roar of the mighty blast; while furrowing up the ocean in its passage, the tempest came swooping down upon us and *around* us, in a species of whirlwind.

Bravely the *Eugenie* met it, for her captain and men handled her nobly.

She had her topgallant sails furled, her courses up, the topsails lowered upon the cap, and the reef-tackles close out; but she swayed fearfully when careening beneath the hot breath of the mighty blast, and riding over those black mountains of water, which in fierce succession it impelled towards her. High she went over a sloping sheet of foam one moment, and the next saw her plunging into a deep black valley of that midnight sea; so deep, that the wind seemed to pass *over* us, the canvas flapped to the mast, and we only

caught its weight and power when rising quickly on the crest of the next mighty roller.

Meanwhile the green forked lightning flashed so brightly that at times we could see every rope in the vessel, our own blanched and pale faces, as we held on by ringbolts and belaying-pins to save ourselves from being washed overboard by the blinding sheets of mingled foam and rain that deluged the deck, over which the sea was also breaking heavily every instant.

Each time the *Eugenie* rose in her buoyancy, her decks were half full of water, and the longboat amidships filled so fast that a man with a bucket could scarcely keep it baled.

Following the whirlwind, we went round *five* times in *thirty-five* minutes, with the after-yards *squared* and the head-yards braced *sharp up*.

Then the black mass of sulphureous cloud in which we were enveloped seemed to ascend, and with the same rapidity with which it approached, passed away into the sky ; "the chamber of the thunder," as the Bard of Cona names it, became again clear, blue, and starry, though marked by occasional masses of flying vapour. The rain ceased, and the *Eugenie* heaved upon a foam-covered sea, over which there passed from time to time short squalls, compelling us to lower the double-reefed topsails and run before the wind.

Now a stiff glass of grog was served round to all, and by turns we contrived to get some dry clothing.

In the end of the middle watch—about four o'clock A.M.—there was suddenly visible upon our larboard bow a faint and vapoury light that shot upward in the sky from time to time like jets of steam.

This singular appearance was high above the horizon, and first caught the anxious eye of Captain Weston.

“Hah ! do you see that ?” said he to me.

“What is it ?”

“The Peak of Adam—Teneriffe.”

“The great volcanic peak in the Fortunate Isles !”

“Old Tenny Reef in the Canaries, we calls it, sir,” said Tattooed Tom, who was at the wheel. “It ain’t a volcano now ; but it can’t give over its old trade o’ smoking altogether, and blows up steam like a screw propeller, or just as a whale does water through his spiracles.”

“Tom means what the Spaniards term the *ventas*, or nostrils, of the peak, through which the aqueous vapours come with a buzzing sound, and these cause a species of light,” said Hislop.

“Well, thank Heaven, though we *are* far out of our course, that blast has done no more than wet

our storm jackets, and scrape some of our paint off."

"We have come out of it uncommon well, sir," said Tom, as he stood with his feet planted firmly apart on the deck, his hard brown hands grasping the wheel, with the helm amidships, as we were still before the wind, and the light of the binnacle flaring upward on his weather-beaten face, with its strange zebra-like stripes—at least, on so much of his grim visage as the peak of his sou'-wester and a scarlet cravat that was round his throat and jaws permitted us to see. "The last time I was in such a breeze was a pampero off the mouth of the Rio de la Plata; but then we had our foresail split to ribbons, and the ship was canted over on her beam ends almost. The mainsail was blown right out of the men's hands, and flapped in the sky like thunder, while the craft—a five-hundred ton ship she was, and all copper fastened—was just on the point of capsizing, when with a crash that made our hearts ache, snap went the jibboom and topmasts off at the caps, just as you'd break a 'bacca-pipe at the bowl. She righted after *that*; but four of our best men were swept away to leeward, and never seen again. And now, Master Rodney, with all your book-learning, or you, Master Hislop, with all yours, can you tell me why such things as tornados, hurricanes, pamperos, and

the like, are sent to torment poor hard-working fellows such as me?"

"I can," said Hislop, turning his handsome but wet and weather-beaten face to the steersman.

"You can, sir?" reiterated Tom, loudly and incredulously.

"Yes, in four lines. Listen—

"‘Perhaps *this* storm was sent with healing breath,
From distant climes to scourge disease and death;
’Tis ours on Thine unerring laws to trust :
With Thee, great Lord,—whatever *is*, is *just*!’"

"Faith, you are right, sir," said honest Tom Lambourne, touching his tarry hat in respect to the mate, mingled with that piety which, in his own rugged way, a seaman is never without.

CHAPTER X.

I GO ASHORE.

THE wind lulled away into a gentle breeze ; reef after reef was shaken out until a full spread of canvas once more covered the spars of the *Eugenie* ; and to repair some trifling damages of the night we crept in shore.

As day brightened through clouds half rain, half mist, and wholly grey or obscure, we saw the land looming high and dark. Beyond it in the distance there was a space of vivid light ; in the foreground, surf white as snow was breaking on the beach, and high over all, in mid-air, towered the wondrous Peak of Adam, on the eastern side of which the sun (as yet *unrisen* to us) was shining brightly when we came to anchor in the harbour of Santa Cruz.

We moored in thirty-three fathoms water, about half a mile from the shore, which in most places is steep, with green and lovely slopes rising high above it. As Captain Weston proposed to weigh next

morning, he allowed me to go ashore, but sent with me, to be a guide and companion, Tom Lambourne, the tattooed sailor, who had been frequently before at the Grand Canary, and in whom he reposed great trust.

He gave me a courier-bag containing some provisions, a flask of spirits, and a telescope ; and thus provided, old Tom and I, with such emotions of pleasure as two newly-escaped schoolboys might feel, landed on the shore, which seemed to heave, sink, and rise under my feet—for after the late storm I still felt that which is termed “the roll of the ship.”

It was in this harbour of Santa Cruz that the famous old English Admiral Blake encountered, and within six hours burned and sunk, seven great Spanish galleons, though they were anchored under the protecting cannon of seven forts and a strong castle, in the walls of which some of his shot were shown imbedded for many years after.

I cast longing eyes to the summit of the mighty Peak of Adam. It seemed to rise sheer from the sea, over which, literally *piercing* the clouds, it towers to the height of more than twelve thousand feet ; but the idea of attempting to climb it within so short a space of time as we had to spend on shore never occurred to me ; but what a feat it would have been to relate when I returned to Erlesmere !

The morning was early yet ; the sun was barely above the now cloudless horizon ; so the shadow of this stupendous cone was cast not only over the whole island, which seems to form merely its base, but to the far horizon, perhaps beyond it ; for there are writers who assert that in clear weather Cape Bojadore, that dreary and barren promontory of Africa, ninety miles distant, is visible from its summit.

Did the waves of the sea ever overflow that mighty Peak ? At such a question the mind becomes lost in conjecture.

As I am *not* writing a descriptive book of travels, but merely a plain narrative of my own very recent adventures, I need not detail at great length either the magnitude or the aspect of this great island-mountain of the Atlantic.

From cliffs of dark brown basalt, against which the ocean pours in vain its foam and fury, we ascended the steep slope of the volcano for a few miles. Then at our feet, as it were, we could see that fertile island, where a perpetual spring seems to smile, and where the fragrant myrtle, the golden orange-trees, and the dark funereal cypress form the mere hedgerows of those plantations where the sugar-cane, the broad-leaved plantain, the luscious Indian fig, the trailing vine, the fragrant cinnamon, and the pretty coffee-bush, were all flourishing

in a luxuriance that filled us with wonder and pleasure.

Farther off was the boundless sea, of that deep blue which it borrowed from the sky above ; and mirrored in its depth were the shipping in the roadstead, with their white canvas hanging loose to dry in the sun ; the green woods and dark rocks reflected downward, and the old turreted castle of Santa Cruz, with the scarlet and yellow banner of Castile and Leon on its time-worn ramparts.

The summit of the great cone, on the clothed sides of which we never tired of gazing, soon became lost in vapour ; far above the dark green belt of many miles, named the Region of Laurels, and that other belt or forest of timber, where pines, chestnuts, and oaks of vast size mingle their varied foliage together, the mountain seemed all of a violet tint, which paled away into faint blue as its apex mingled and became lost amid the gossamer clouds.

The vines, in luxuriance, bordered the pathway as we ascended, and it is said that for years after the wine has been taken from these isles to England or elsewhere, it always ferments and becomes agitated when the vineries from whence it came are in bloom ; but this tale may perhaps be as true as the accounts of those mighty ruins which Pliny avers once covered all the Fortunate Islands, but of which no trace remains now.

Tom Lambourne and I, after a ramble of some hours, found ourselves in a wild and solitary place, where blocks of lava and heaps of yellow pumice lust were lying amongst shattered masses of basalt, which were studded with spars and crystals that glittered as the sunshine streamed through a ravine upon them.

The sides of this ravine were clothed with rich rosewood and little thickets of the *retama-blanca*, which there grows about ten feet high, and is covered with tufts of odoriferous flowers.

The distant sea, the waves of which seemed to bask or sleep in the sunshine, closed the perspective of this ravine; and there we could see the *Eugenie* at anchor, with her snow-white courses loose and her other canvas neatly handed.

Being warmed by our walk, we sat down within the mouth of a species of natural grotto, formed by masses of lava and basalt, which in some past age the throes of the volcano had thrown and heaped together. There a clear spring gurgled joyously from a fissure in the rocks; and now, opening the courier-bag, we proceeded to make our breakfast on the viands I had brought from the ship—to wit, Bologna sausage and biscuits, with brandy-and-water.

The air was deliciously clear, and over the brow of the rocky chasm in which we sat, there fell a

natural screen of the wild Indian fig and vine creepers, and these shaded us from the increasing heat of the morning sun.

All was still there.

We heard only the coo of the great wood-pigeons among the gorgeous foliage, or the sweet notes of the little golden-coloured canary birds, as they twittered about us when we scared them from their nests, which they usually build in the *barrancas* or watercourses, such being the coolest places in that volcanic isle.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW TOM WAS TATTOOED.

My companion was a short and thick-set sailor, about forty years of age, and whose figure was suggestive of great muscular strength ; his hair was cut short, but his whiskers were of the most voluminous description, as he was anxious to conceal as much as possible of the strange circles, stripes, and grotesque designs with which his sun-burned face was covered, and which by their form and blackness, imparted a hideous aspect to features that otherwise were rather good and pleasing.

He was an intelligent man, and well read, for the humble class to which he belonged.

“Aye, Master Rodney,” said he, on perceiving that I was still surveying him with something of wonder (and his face was a point on which he was particularly sensitive) ; “you see what a precious figure-head those ’tarnal niggers on the coast of Africa made for me.”

"How did this happen, Tom?" said I, filling his drinking-horn.

"About twenty years ago, Master Rodney, I belonged to the *Arrow*, a smart Liverpool bark of two hundred and twenty tons register. I made many voyages in her to South America, but at last, as bad luck, or my destiny (as men say in the play) would have it, she was chartered for the West Coast of Africa, to trade with the natives, but *not* in black cattle, for slavery was never our line of business.

"We sailed from the Mersey in June, and early in August found ourselves at the mouth of the Congo river, after a prosperous voyage; but on the night we made the land, a heavy gale came on, and it veered round all the points of the compass in an hour. The sea and sky were as black as they could be, and everything else was black too, except the breakers on the shore to leeward, and heaven knows they were white enough—too white and too near to be pleasant.

"Our skipper handled the *Arrow* well, and she obeyed every touch of the helm as a horse might do its bridle; she was sharply built, but heavily sparred, and no other square-rigged craft upon the sea could beat her on a wind.

"I think I see her yet, Master Rodney, for she was the first vessel I shipped on board of, and hang

me if I didn't love her as if she had been my old mother's house, near Deptford docks.

"Her hull was long and low, and sat like a swan in the water, only that she was not white, like a swan, but as black as paint could make her. Aloft, the masts tapered away like fishing-rods, crossed by the square yards, while stays, shrouds, halyards, and hamper, were always taut as if made of cast iron ; but for all this, she failed to weather that gale off the Congo river. She missed stays and got sternway, so you see, sir, it was soon all over with her after that."

"How—I do not understand?"

"Don't you know what sternway is? What *do* they teach folks ashore? She was taken *aback* in the hurricane—the most dangerous thing that can happen to any vessel—a sudden shift of wind threw her on her broadside in the trough of the sea, and with her deck *towards* the storm, so her hatches were soon beaten in—all the sooner that she was driven on a coral-reef near the Shark's Nose, where the sea was like a sheet of foam around her.

"Five poor fellows were washed away and drowned ; but when day broke, and the storm abated a little, the captain, six men and I, got ashore in the longboat just as the poor *Arrow* began to break up, for we could see the waves beating into her and rending asunder the decks, the inner and

outer sheathing, as if they couldn't scatter the cargo fast enough far and wide.

"Well, there we were, shipwrecked in a wild place on the West Coast of Africa, at a part of the Congo river where the mangrove trees grow into the water, and have their lower branches covered with oysters and barnacles.

"We could see high blue hills in the distance when the sun came up from the cane swamps and the wild woods which bordered the river, and we sat on the beach for a while looking ruefully at the wreck, of which little now remained but a few timbers, till the increase of the morning heat drove us for shelter into a grove of oil-palms, and there, Master Rodney, we found tulips, lilies, and hyacinths growing wild, and six times larger than any you ever saw in England.

"Some of our men proposed that we should repair the longboat—she was partly stove in—and put to sea, or creep in her along the coast until we were picked up. We were without carpenter's tools; but the captain had a case of surgical instruments, and the first use we made of the saw was to cut into halves an iron buoy which had floated ashore from the wreck.

"Thus we had two kettles, in which we boiled some seabirds and their eggs, and made a mess whereon we breakfasted. Exhausted by the late

storm, the birds were easily knocked down by stones as they sat with drooping wings upon the rocks near the sea ; but scarcely was our miserable meal over, when we heard loud yells, and attracted by the smoke of our fire, down came a whole gang of ugly darkies, all Mussolongos, wild and naked, with rings or fishbones in their long ears and flat noses—all streaked with war-paint and all shouting like madmen as they brandished their muskets and spears.

“ They fired a volley which stretched on the earth the poor captain and all my shipmates, dead or dying. The latter they soon despatched with their knives and spears, and left them to be eaten by wild animals ; but on finding that I had escaped their bullets, they supposed that their Fetish had protected me, and so for a time I was safe.

“ For a whole week I was forced to help these savages in the work of taking all that remained of the wreck to pieces, though hundreds came from the interior, and they wrought hard, some men using even their filed teeth, to get all the iron and copper bolts, which they prized more than the cargo, sails, or spars, as they could fashion them into weapons and the heads of spears and arrows. But with everything they could lay their dingy hands upon, myself included, they made off inland, just as a vessel, which proved to be a King's ship, came round the

Shark's Nose, and thus, with help, protection, and liberty at hand, I was more than ever a prisoner.

"I was in very low spirits, you may be sure, fearing they only intended to fatten me up, like a stall-fed ox, or a turtle in a tub, before cooking and eating me, or making me a sacrifice to some idol carved of wood ; for many times I saw the whole 'tarnal tribe on their knees before the figure-head of the *Arrow*, which had been washed ashore, and was pronounced to be a great Fetish.

"For three days we travelled among deep and slimy green swamps, thick wild woods, and immense pathless canebrakes, where in an hour I saw more tree-leopards and zebras, howling jackals and antelopes, grinning monkeys and chattering parroquets, than ever were seen in all the shows at Greenwich fair, till we arrived at a kraal of a hundred huts, for all the world like pigsties, surrounded by a high palisade of bamboos, and situated in a forest of palms.

"I was now the slave of a chief, whose rigging was rather queer, for it consisted only of a deep fringe, or kilt, of unplaited grass, a necklace of lion's teeth and fish-bones, and a cap of leopard's skin, on which towered a plume of feathers, above a row of human teeth and sea-shells.

"Being rope-ended by an inch-and-half colt—aye, or keelhauled once a day from the foreyardarm

—were jokes when compared to all this African nigger made me undergo, while working for him under a blazing sun, in pestilent swamps, where the very air choked me, as if I had been in a ship with a foul hold, for the slime in these canebrakes was as thick as tar and black as old bilge-water.

“One day he was soothing his excitement by beating me with a heavy bamboo, till my back and arms were covered with blood. Close by were a whole gang of the tribe squatted under a palm-tree, smoking hubble-bubbles made of nutshells, looking on and laughing at the torture I was undergoing ; but in the midst of their sport we heard a roar that made our hearts tremble, and all ready to scamper off.

“There was a mighty crashing and swaying of the wild canes in the adjacent brake, and then a great square-headed and tawny-haired lion, as large as a good-sized pony, and with a tuft like a swab at the end of his switching tail, came plunging forward, with eyes flashing and his red mouth open.

“Souse as a sheet anchor goes into the sea, he sprang upon my owner, and in the time I take to turn this quid, Master Rodney, that troublesome personage was borne off into the jungle a bruised mass of bones and blood, dangling in his jaws.

“The whole thing passed like a flash of lightning !

“At first the niggers were about to pursue the

lion, but upon reflection they thought it less dangerous to fall upon me and kill me outright, saying that my stupid cries had brought the wild animal upon them. Then an old fellow, whose wool had become white with age, who was coiled up in the root of a tree, where he generally berthed himself, and who was considered a wise man, came forward and demanded their attention. He had been a brave fellow in his time, for he wore a row of human teeth at his neck, all strung on a lanyard, with a bit of an old quart bottle which he had found upon the beach, and wore as a 'great medicine,' or order of the Garter perhaps. He saved me by saying, in their outlandish gibberish, that I was evidently under the protection of the great Fetish, in honour of whom I should be made like themselves, and handsomely tattooed.

"I might as well have hallooed to the wind in a tearing pampero or a stiff reef-topsail breeze, Master Rodney, as have attempted to oppose this piece of Congo kindness. In a minute I was hove down under the nasty black paws of five-and-forty howling and jabbering niggers, all smearing me with palm-oil out of calabashes and old gallipots, and they persisted in rubbing it into me till all my skin was nearly peeled off.

"Then the old Fetish-man who lived in the root of the tree, after making three summersets and

uttering six howls, ornamented all my face, hands, and arms in this fashion, using a kind of knife, which he dipped from time to time in some black stuff that he carried in a cocoanut-shell. In ten minutes I was all over serpents and circles, stripes, pothooks and hangers !

“It went to my heart to have my beauty spoiled, but I was far past making any opposition, and so I have had to go through life, in all weathers, with a face like the clown’s in a pantomime.

“They made me so like a nigger that they scarcely knew me from one of themselves. This so favoured my escape, that I soon found an opportunity of giving the Mussolongas the slip in the night, and made a shift, after many a break-heart adventure, to reach a British settlement.

“I remember well when, from a wild forest, I saw before me a long blue ridge. It was the Sierra Leona—or the Mountain of the Lioness, as the niggers thereabout call it—the highest in North or South Guinea. Glad was I, Master Rodney, to see the flag of Old England waving on the fort and in the bay. There was a sloop of war at anchor there, the *Active* ; and when she fired the evening gun you would have thought a whole fleet was saluting, there are so many echoing caves and dens in the mountains and along the shore.

“I soon made my way home to England, but was

more laughed at than pitied for my queer figure-head, which frightened some folks : my old mother especially, for she banged the door right in my face, and called for the police when I went to her old bunk at Deptford.

“ However, I got used to all that sort of thing ; but as folks are so ill-bred and uncharitable ashore, I have left Deptford for ever, and keep always afloat, to be out of harm’s way. So that’s the yarn of how I became tattooed, Master Rodney.”

“ Finish the brandy-and-water, Tom,” said I ; “ and now we shall make a start for the brig—noon is past, and the atmosphere cooler than it was.”

“ Your very good health. Next time we splice the main-brace ashore, I hope it will be in Cuba,” said Tom, finishing the contents of my flask, and then becoming so jovial that he broke at once into an old sea-song, the last two verses of which were somewhat to this purpose :—

“ I learned to splice, to reef, and clew,
To drink my grog with the best of the crew,
And tell a merry story ;
And though I wasn’t very big,
Aloft I’d climb ; nor care a fig
To stand by my gun, or dance a jig,
And all for Britain’s glory !

“ When home I steered again, I found
My poor old mother run aground,
And doleful was her story ;

She had cheated been by a lawyer elf,
Who married her for her old dad's pelf,
But spent it all, then hanged himself.
Hooray for Britain's glory ! ”

Just as Tom concluded this remarkable ditty, with tones that made the volcanic grotto echo to “glory,” a voice that made us start exclaimed close by us—

“Bueno ! Ha ! ha ! Los Inglesos borrachios !”

On hearing this impertinent reflection on our sobriety, we both looked up and saw—what the next chapter will tell you.

CHAPTER XII.

DANGEROUS COMPANY.

BEHIND us stood eight fellows, five of whom had muskets, and three heavy bludgeons. They were apparently Spanish seafaring men ; but whether contrabandistas of the lowest class, a portion of a slaver's crew, or merely drunken brawlers, we could not at first determine. However, they soon made us aware that robbery was their object, and that they were no way averse to a little homicide also, if we interfered with their plans in the least.

Some had their coarse, but glossy and intensely black hair, confined by nets or caul's ; others had only Barcelona handkerchiefs round their heads. The spots of blood upon these, together with several patches and discoloured eyes, showed us that these modern Iberians had been fighting among themselves. Their attire, which consisted only of red or blue shirts and dirty canvas trousers, was rather dilapidated ; but something of the picturesque was

imparted to it by the sashes of glaring red and yellow worsted which girt their waists, and in which they had long knives stuck conspicuously.

By their bearing, their dark glaring eyes, their muscular figures, their bare arms, chests, and feet, their bronzed, sallow, and ugly visages,—and more than all, by their rags, which were redolent of garlic and coarse tobacco, it was evident that we had fallen into unpleasant society. Several had silver rings in their ears, and on the bare chest of one I saw a crucifix marked either with ink or gunpowder.

These fellows had come from the inner or back part of the cavern, where they had evidently been observing us for some time before they so suddenly appeared.

“Acqu’ardiente,” said one, approvingly, as he applied his fierce hooked nose to my empty flask, and then placed it in his pocket. A second snatched away my courier-bag, and a third appropriated my telescope, which he stuck in his sash.

Taking up a stone which lay at hand, I was about to hurl it at the head of the latter when the muzzle of a cocked musket pointed to my breast, and the butt of another applied roughly to my back, admonished me that discretion was the better part of valour.

“El page de escoba—ha, ha !” (the cabin-boy),

said one, contemptuously, as he examined my attire—a smart blue jacket, with gilt anchor buttons, which Hislop had given me. My portemonnaie, which contained only a few shillings, and my gold watch, a present given to me by my mother when I went to Eton, were soon taken from me. As for poor Tom, he possessed only a brass tobacco-box, a short black pipe, and one shilling and sixpence; yet he was speedily deprived of them by one who seemed to be the leader of the gang.

“You rascally Jack Spaniard!” said Tom, shaking his clenched fist in the robber’s face, “if ever I haul alongside of you elsewhere, look out for squalls!”

At this they all laughed; and seizing us by the arms, dragged us into the back part of the cavern or fissure in the rocks, leaving one of their number, armed with a musket, as sentinel, at the entrance, where he lit a paper cigar, and stretching himself on the grassy bank, placed his hands under his head, and proceeded leisurely to smoke in the sunshine.

These proceedings filled us with great alarm; now that they had robbed us of everything save our clothes, what could their object be?

One of them produced two pieces of rope, with which our hands were tied. Dragged by some, and receiving severe blows and bruises from the clenched

hands and musket-butts of others—accompanied by the imprecations and coarse laughter of all—we were conveyed through a low-roofed grotto, or natural gallery in the rocks, the echoes of which repeated their voices with a thousand reverberations.

The only light here was by the reflection of the sunshine at the entrance, where the basalt was coated by a white substance, the *débris* of some old volcanic eruption ; for *the slope*, up which we had been ascending all the morning, formed a portion of the great Peak. And now we became sensible of a strange sound and a strange odour pervading all the place.

Through a rent in the rocky roof of the grotto there fell a clear bright stream of sunlight, that revealed the terrors of the place towards which our captors dragged us.

On one side there yawned a vast black fissure or chasm in the sombre masses of glassy obsidian and red blocks of lava which composed the floor of that horrid cavern ; and from this fissure there ascended, and doubtless still ascends at times, a hot sulphureous steam, which rendered breathing difficult and induced an inclination to sneeze.

From the depth of that hideous chasm, the profundity of which no mortal eye could measure, and nohuman being could contemplate without awe

and terror, we heard a strange, buzzing sound, as if from the bowels of the inner earth, far—heaven alone knew how far—down below.

In fact, we were upon the verge of one of those natural spiracles which the natives term “the Nostrils,” or avenues through which the hot vapours of that tremendous Piton ascend ; and the buzzing sound that made our hearts shrink, we scarcely knew why, was caused by some volcanic throe at the bottom of the mountain, whose base is many a mile below the waters of the sea.

This fissure was almost twelve feet broad, and across it there lay a plank, forming a species of bridge.

Two of our captors crossed, and then ordered us to follow them.

I obeyed like one in a dream ; but my heart was chilled by a terror so deadly that I had no power or thought of resistance. My first fear was that the plank might be trundled from under our feet, and that we would be launched into the black abyss below ; but such was *not* the object of these Spaniards, as Tom and I were permitted to pass in safety.

The remainder of the thieves followed, and we found ourselves in another grotto, the roof of which was covered by stalactites, that glittered like gothic pendants of alabaster in the light that fell from the

upper fissure, which formed a natural window, and through it we could see the thin white steam ascending and curling in the sunshine.

Now, supposing that they had us in perfect security, our captors proceeded to hold a consultation as to what they should do with us; and imagining that we were both ignorant of their language, or what is more probable, caring little whether we knew it or not, they canvassed the most terrible resolutions with perfect coolness and freedom of speech.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VENTANA.

TOM LAMBOURNE'S face wore somewhat of a blanched hue, through which the stripes of his tattooing seemed blacker than ever. A severe cut on his forehead, from which the blood was oozing, did not add to his personal appearance. He scarcely knew a word of Spanish, but seemed instinctively aware that we had fallen into hands nearly as dangerous as his former acquaintances the Mussolongos, for he said—

“Master Rodney, I fear we have run our last knot off the log-line, and our sand-glass wont run again, unless heaven gives the order to *turn*. Yet, if I could but get one of these muskets, to have a shot at the rascally cargo-puddlers before it's all over with us, I would be content. As it is, I am all over blood from clew to ear-ring, and they have well nigh choked me by shaking a quid down my throat.”

"Hush, Tom," said I, for I was listening to a discussion which took place among the Spaniards.

"Do you understand their lingo?"

"A little."

"What are they saying?" he asked, with growing interest.

"I will tell you immediately."

But as they all spoke at once in the sonorous Spanish of the Catalonian coast, mingled with obscure slang and nautical phrases, some time elapsed before I could understand them. Meanwhile, how terrible were the thoughts that filled my mind.

If these fellows murdered and cast us into that awful chasm, the deed would never be known; until the day of doom, our fate and our remains could no more be traced than the smoke that melts into the sky. Even if we escaped unhurt, but were detained so long that the brig sailed without us, what would be our condition, penniless, forlorn, and unknown, in that foreign island? But this was a minor evil.

Then I burned to revenge the lawless treatment to which we were subjected, and the blows and bruises their cowardly hands had dealt so freely.

"Companeros," I heard one say, "one of these fellows is tattooed, and would sell very well to the South American planters with the rest that will

soon be under hatches. He is worth keeping, if he cannot ransom himself; as for the *other*——”

“El muchacho !” (the boy) said they, glancing at me.

“Si—el page de escoba—if he is allowed to return, a complaint may find its way to the Senor Alcalde, whose alguazils may come and borrow our topsails and anchor for a time; whereas if we heave him where the others went yesterday——”

“Where?”

“Into the ventana, hombre !” was the fierce response; “and then no more will be heard of the affair.”

My blood grew cold at these words, and I scarcely knew what followed, till the first man who spoke came forward and addressed us.

“Inglesos,” said he, “we have decided that one of you, after swearing not to reveal our present hiding-place, shall return within four hours, bearing a fitting ransom for both, else, so surely as the clock strikes, he who is left behind goes into the ventana of the mountain, where never did the longest deep-sea line find a bottom—not that I suppose any man was ever ass enough to try. Santos ! do you hear?” he added, striking his musket-butt sharply on the rocks when perceiving that Tom was ignorant of all he said, and that I was stupified by it.

"Si, senor," said I, and translated it to Tom Lambourne, who twirled his tarry hat on his forefinger, stuck his quid in his cheek, slapped his thigh vigorously, and gave other nautical manifestations of extreme surprise and discomposure.

"Ransom, Master Rodney?" he reiterated; "in the name of old Davy, who would ransom a poor Jack like me?"

"The whole crew would table their month's wages on the capstan head—aye, in a moment, Tom," I replied, with confidence.

"I'm sure they would, and the Captain and Master Hislop, too, for the matter o' that, rather than poor shipmates should come to harm; but——"

"As for *me*," said I, with growing confidence, "I am, as you said, senores, only the page de escoba."

"Bah!" said the Spaniard, grinning, and showing a row of sharp white teeth under a dirty and sable moustache; "though I said so, I knew better. A shipboy seldom has a watch like *this*," he added, displaying my gold repeater. "Now, we shall keep *you*; and if this seaman—after he has first sworn that he will not betray us—does not return to us here with five hundred dollars within two hours after sunset, *par el*"—(here he made a dreadful vow in Spanish) "we will toss you like a dead dog into the ventana of the mountain. Look down,

and see what a journey is before you," he added, with a diabolical smile, as he dragged me to the beetling edge of the chasm, and forced me to look into it.

Our eyes had now become so accustomed to the light of the gallery or grotto, that the rays of sunshine falling through the fissure above us were sufficient to disclose a portion of the vast profundity on the verge of which we stood.

From the earth's womb, far, far down below, there came upward a choking steam, with a hollow buzzing sound, which deepened at times to a rumble.

This steam or mist rose and fell on the currents of air ; sometimes it sank so low that nothing but a black and dreary void met the eye, which ached in attempting to pierce it. Anon the steam would rise in spiral curls from that gloomy bed below, where doubtless the fires of the now almost extinct volcano seethe their embers in the waves of the ocean.

The words, "have mercy," were on my lips, but I could not utter them ; nor would they have availed me. Ignorant of what the ruffian said, and believing he was about to thrust me in, poor Tom Lambourne, in the fulness of his heart, uttered a howl of dismay ; and at that moment the sentinel whom the gang had left at the entrance to their lurking-place, came hurriedly in, with alarm expressed in his glittering

eyes, and a finger placed, as a warning, on his hairy lip.

“Para! Paz! Silenzio!” (hold—peace—silence), he exclaimed, and added that four officers from the garrison of Santa Cruz had dismounted in the ravine, unbitted their horses, and had seated themselves under a tree to smoke.

This information was received by the band with oaths and mutterings of impatience; and by us with mingled emotions of hope and agony—hope that they might be the means of our escape or rescue; and agony to know that such means were *so* near, and yet could avail us nothing; for on the slightest sound being made by either of us, there were the Albacete knives of our captors on one hand, and the ventana—that awful ventana—on the other, to ensure for ever the silence and oblivion of the grave.

Not the least of my sufferings was from the cord which secured my wrists. Already the skin was swollen, cut, and bleeding in consequence of the tightness with which these wretches had bound me.

CHAPTER XIV.

SEQUEL TO OUR ADVENTURE.

FOR two hours—they seemed an eternity to me—it would appear, the four Spanish officers lingered over their wine-flasks and cigars in the wooded ravine, their movements being duly reported from time to time by one of the outlaws, who stole to the cavern mouth and peeped out.

At last, they mounted and rode off, when a fresh cause for wrath and delay was produced by the announcement that a wagon, drawn by mules and attended by several labourers and negroes, had broken down on the road about a mile distant.

The irritation of our Spaniards—some of whom spoke of having a ship to join—was now so great that I feared they might end the whole affair by disposing of us in a summary manner.

This wagon being heavily laden caused a delay for several hours. The sun's rays ceased to shine through the fissure above us; the grotto grew dark by the increase of imperceptible shadows; the dingy

faces of our olive-skinned detainers grew darker still ; and their impatience was only surpassed by ours, for we, too, had a ship to rejoin.

Every minute of these hours—every second of every minute—passed slowly, like a pang of agony in my heart ; and every feature of that natural vault, through which the dying daylight stole—with the faces and voices of the men whose victims we were, and more than all, the ceaseless and eternal buzz in the dark chasm that yawned close by—the ventana, or nostril, of the Piton—are yet vividly impressed upon my memory.

At last the darkness was so great that a lantern was lighted, and its wavering gleams, as they fell on the crystals, the spar, quartz, and glassy blocks of black obsidian and ruddy lava which formed the walls and arch of the cavern, on the dark ferocious visages, the gaudy sashes, the naked arms and feet, the scrubby black beards and brass-mounted knives and muskets of the taciturn Spaniards, who sat in a sullen group smoking paper cigaritos,—all added to the gloomy but picturesque horror of the place and of the incident.

“ Antonio, que hora es ? ” I heard one say, inquiring the time.

“ Las nueve y media, companero mio ” (half-past nine), replied the possessor of my gold watch, which he consulted with considerable complacency.

"Maldita !" growled the others, knitting their brows, for the dusk was rapidly becoming darkness, and they had no desire for killing us, if we could be made profitable. I have often thought since, that had Tom actually procured and returned with the required ransom of five hundred dollars, they would have pocketed it and then killed us both—me most certainly, as they seemed to have other views for poor Tom in the Southern States.

"We have had a long spell of this," said he, in a low voice. "I am going to escape, if I can."

"Escape ! but how ?"

"I don't know exactly *how*, yet ; but we must first have our lashings cast off."

"Would to Heaven they were, Tom. My hands are so swollen and my wrists so cut and benumbed, that my arms are well nigh powerless," I whispered, in a low voice, like a groan.

"Sit with me here, in the shadow of this angle of rock ; and now, as the darkness is fairly set in, I shall soon make you free."

By a rapid and skilful application of his strong teeth to the cord which bound my wrists, he untwisted the knot and freed my hands ; and then in the suddenly-given luxury of being able to stretch my arms, I almost forgot the necessity for concealing the fact that I was now unbound.

I soon found an opportunity for untying Tom's fetters. Then we kept our hands clasped before us, as if still manacled, and watched, waited, and hoped—we scarcely knew for what—while in the further end of this inner cave, our detainers sat sullenly smoking, and, by the dim lantern light, making up cigaritos from their tobacco-pouches and those little rice-paper books which are now procurable nearly everywhere.

From the conversation of our captors I could gather that our brig, the *Eugenie*, was visible at anchor in the roadstead of Santa Cruz, a mile or so distant.

Three of these Spaniards had placed their muskets against the wall of rock, and seemed disposed to doze off asleep.

Close by us lay the plank which crossed that dread ventana, like the infernal bridge of Poulsherro, which the Mahommedans believe crosses the sea of fire that on the day of doom shall separate Good from Evil. Tom and I looked at it, and exchanged glances of intelligence from time to time, but the attempt to rush across might prove doubly fatal to one or both. A slip of the foot would hurl us into eternity; and if the passage were achieved, we would be exposed to the fire of those we fled from, and met by that of the armed man at the mouth of the grotto.

Thus our position and its perils were somewhat complicated.

Suddenly the distant report of a piece of ordnance, coming from the seaward, made us all look up and listen.

“El ruido que hace el canon !” (the crack of a gun), exclaimed a Spaniard, scrambling up to the lower end of the fissure in the arch of the grotto, and looking out.

“We all know that well enough ; but what does it mean ?” asked the other.

“The English brig at the anchorage has fired it. I see a light glittering on her deck ; and now away it goes up to the foremast head.”

“It is the *Eugenie*, Master Rodney,” whispered Tom.

“Can the captain be about to sail to-night—and without us ?” said I, with growing dismay.

“No ; but he is impatient for us to come off. He knows well what a ’tarnal slippery set of imps these Jack Spaniards are, and has shown a light and fired a gun as a hint for us to look sharp.”

“Companero,” said one of the Spaniards to the other who was looking out, “are you sure that it *is* the English brig, and not ours ?”

“Yes ; but by St. Paul ! there is a light burning now on the Castillo de Santa Cruz ; so our craft had better get her sweeps out, and put to sea, even

without us. Can the Senor Gobernador have smelt a rat?"

This announcement, though *we* knew not what it referred to, had an evident effect on our captors, who were probably part of a slaver's crew; for they all scrambled up to the opening in the rocks to look out.

"Now, now is the time to slip our cables and run. Follow me!" said Tom Lambourne, in a hoarse but determined whisper, as he sprang forward—snatched up two of the muskets, and rushed across the plank, tripping as lightly as he would have done along a boom or yard, though it crossed a gulf so terrible.

Less steadily, but not less rapidly, you may be assured—yet with a frozen heart—I followed him, and his hard tarry hand was ready to grasp mine and drag me forward into safety, while with a violent kick he tossed the plank away, and surging down it went, into the black gulf we had crossed.

It vanished in a moment, and no sound ever ascended, for it seemed to have fallen into a pit that was as dark as it was bottomless!

"Take this musket, and see that you can use it, sir," said Tom, as an emotion of bravado seized him. "And so, you Spanish greenhorns," he shouted, "you thought to sell me for a nigger to the Yankees, did you? Whoop—hurrah!"

A volley of Spanish oaths followed this rash out-

burst, which drew their attention at once upon us. Some rushed to the dark brink and paused, I suppose, for neither Tom nor I could see distinctly, as there was a double explosion which filled the cavern with echoes like those of rolling thunder, and a momentary glare of smoky light, while two musket-balls whistled past us ; and I felt one like a hot cinder, as it grazed my left ear. Then came an Albacete knife, which was hurled by no erring hand, for it wounded Tom's right knee.

"Give them a shot, Mr. Rodney," said he, furiously ; "I'll reserve my fire for the sentry,—and here he is already !"

And just as the eighth fellow, who was on the watch, alarmed by the firing, came rushing in with his piece at full cock, Tom fired at him.

"Saints and angels !" yelled the Spaniard, as he bounded into the air, and then fell flat on his face, where he lay, beating the earth with his feet and hands.

"Fire ! fire ! Master Rodney, and then run for it, before they can reload," cried Tom, who saw that I was irresolute ; "give 'em a stern chaser !"

My blood was now fairly up. Wheeling round, I levelled full at the group, one of whom was in the act of *taking aim at me* ; while I saw the steel ramrod of the other, who had a musket, glitter in the lantern light as he reloaded.

I fired ! I know not whether the ball hit ; but one of the ruffians sprang wildly forward, and fell headlong into the ventana !

“ That will do ! ” cried Tom ; “ away now, as fast as we can—stretch out—bear away for the harbour and the brig ! ”

Grasping our newly acquired weapons, which we never thought of relinquishing, we rushed out, and, descending the ravine, favoured by the starlight, instinctively took the path which led directly to the harbour.

With a heart that beat wildly, a head in a whirl of thoughts, and every pulse quickened by the whole affair—by the ferocious treatment to which we had been subjected for so many hours ; by the perils which had menaced us ; by the narrow escapes we had made from bullets, and when twice crossing that awful chasm ; by the wild and disastrous tragedy which closed the adventures of a long and exciting day—I ran beside Tom Lambourne ; on, on, without a breath to spare or a word to utter.

Headlong we stumbled over piles of old lava ; now we sank ankle deep among soft pumice dust ; anon we rolled, fell, or scrambled through wild vines and creepers ; then through fields of growing maize and wheat, or plantations of coffee and apple trees ; but never paused until we reached the base of the mighty Piton, where, breathless, gasping,

panting, and bathed in perspiration, we lay down in a little thicket of cinnamon bushes by the wayside, to rest for a short space.

During this flight I had never spoken, but Tom from time to time indulged in disjointed remarks expressive of an exultation in which I could not share, being only thankful to heaven for my escape. But poor Tom had seen more of a rough life, and of many a violent death, than it could possibly have been my lot to witness.

“Ha, ha! you Spanish swabs! We’ve slung two of your hammocks in a hot place—before the time, perhaps!” said he. “What a row they made, like so many niggers clearing a cargo, when we sheered off! Lucky it was that I eased off our tow-lines in time! I have a good mind to put about, stand for the cave, and pot another of those Spanish gorillas!”

Whether he meant *guerillas* I did not inquire, but was happy when we reached the harbour, and I felt the cool breeze of the ocean fan my throbbing temples and my hands, which, from being so long and so tightly tied with rough cords, and having the blood afterwards driven through them by rapid exertion, felt literally burning *hot*.

All was dark and still when we ran along the stone mole of Santa Cruz. Fortunately, at that late hour, there were no officials to question or

molest us ; and we could see the brig anchored about half a mile distant, with the lantern still burning at the foremasthead. The light on the Castle had disappeared.

We soon found a small punt at the landing stairs, and taking possession of it without leave, cast loose the painter and shoved off.

Silently and steadily, with all our remaining strength we pulled for the brig, and were soon alongside.

"Well, this spree is over, Master Rodney," said Tattooed Tom, wiping his brow with his sleeve when we stood on the deck, where the wondering crew gathered round us ; "but catch me having another in this deuced Tenny Reef,—that's all !"

CHAPTER XV.

THE ANCHOR A-PEAK.

ALARMED by the foregoing narrative, which was fully corroborated by our excitement, by the two muskets we had brought on board as trophies, by the state of our hands and wrists, and the numerous cuts and bruises we had upon us; and fearing the consequent detention of the brig for some legal inquiry, Captain Weston prepared at once for putting to sea.

I was happy when finding myself on the deck of the *Eugenie*, but still more supremely happy on hearing Weston's resolution to get under way, as I possessed very vague but decidedly unpleasant ideas of Spanish justice, and had visions of *alcaldes*, *alguazils*, wheels, garottes, and even the masked familiars of the Inquisition itself, floating before me.

My heart beat responsive to the clank of the windlass pawls, as the *Eugenie* was hove short on

her anchor, and the hands started aloft to cast loose the topsails.

Weston threw our two muskets into the sea, lest their discovery on board might cause suspicion or annoyance.

The morning was clear, cool, and starry ; as yet no vestige of dawn was visible, and all was still and quiet on shore ; but I was in momentary expectation of seeing a boat dash off towards us, though those from whom we had escaped could have no just cause of complaint.

Suddenly I heard the sound of oars, and saw a long, low boat shoot out from the obscurity of the harbour. My heart stood still for a moment as this craft was steered in our direction, but to my infinite relief it boarded a Costa Rican that lay near us.

As yet the shadows of night were on land and sea—on everything save the cone of the Peak that towered above the clouds, and *there* shone the light of the yet unrisen sun, yellow deepening into saffron, purple, blue, and then indigo, blending with the blackness of night as the eye descended to the shore.

So Weston gave the order to brace the foreyards aback and the mainyards full ; another wrench at the windlass and the anchor was tripped.

"Heave and a-wash!" cried Tom Lambourne, cheerily, giving the usual call of encouragement, when the dripping anchor-ring is just out of the water, and the stock is seen to stir the surface.

The courses were let fall and the jib was hoisted; her head fell rapidly round and she payed off bravely. Then the fiery cone of the Piton and the lights of Santa Cruz which had glittered in tremulous lines along the water on our beam were shining upon our lee quarter.

"Fill away the headyards—handsomely now!" cried Weston, and just as the first streak of day, coming on with tropical rapidity, began to brighten the horizon, and shed long shiny ripples on the sea, the canvas swelled out, the reef points began to patter on the taut bosom of every snow-white sail, and the loose rigging was blown out in graceful bends.

There was a fine breeze rising; the white water rippled under the forefoot of the *Eugenie*, and soon it boiled in foam as we sheeted home the topsails and ran along the western shore of the mountain isle.

About the same time the Costa Rican brig which was at anchor nearer the shore (a smart craft she was, straight in the bends and all black, save a yellow streak), also got ready for sea with great

expedition and worked out of the harbour; and when the hot sun, which erewhile had lit up the vast continent of Africa to the eastward of us, rose from the ocean, we saw her black hull and white canvas shining in his morning rays about a mile astern.

"You say, Marc, that craft is a Costa Rican?" said Weston, doubtfully.

"Yes, sir," replied Hislop.

"She may be, but she is also a Spanish dealer in black cattle," said Weston, who was looking at her through a powerful double-barrelled glass. "I am certain if you could only see her deck when she careens a bit, you would make out the ring-bolts for lashing the slaves to in fine weather."

"Aye, and perhaps those for the carronades too," added Hislop; "she looks rather rakish."

"You are just of my mind, sir," added Tom Lambourne, who was at the wheel. "She'll see the Shark's Nose and the Congo river before she sees the Mosquito creeks or the hills of Costa Rica; and I have a shrewd notion that the pirates we escaped from last night are part of her crew, if one may judge from what Master Rodney, who knows their lingo, overheard them say."

Except across the Peak of Teneriffe, where a cloud of white vapour floated in mid-air like a permanent

cymar or girdle, and above which some thousand feet of the mighty cone towered into the blue immensity of space, mellowing from green and purple to a faint grey tint, the sky was without a cloud.

The waves danced and sparkled in the morning sunshine, the fresh breeze swept pleasantly over their whitening tops and whistled through our rigging, as we ran along the shore with considerable speed; and now our hearts beat lightly, for the broad free ocean was around us, and on clearing the dangerous rocks at Punta de Anaga by giving them a wide berth, we felt the heavier swell of the Atlantic as we brought the larboard tacks on board, and ran, close-hauled, on a taut bowline between the Isles of Teneriffe and Palma, keeping the weather-gage of the Costa Rican, and leaving her at the same time fast and far astern.

We had a delightful run through the fertile Archipelago of the Fortunate Isles, and after clearing San Josef, found the wind come more aft. Long after night had closed in, and darkness had enveloped all the sea and the isle of Teneriffe, the cone of the Peak shone redly in mid-air, with the light of the sun that had set in the western waters of the Atlantic.

For the whole of that day we had run fast

through the water, making at least seven knots an hour off the log-line, but midnight came before we saw the last of the mighty Peak of Adam.

By that time the wind was fair, and we bore merrily away for the Isles of the West.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN INCIDENT.

By the time we had been a month at sea, having applied myself assiduously to work, I picked up a little knowledge of seamanship. I took my turn of watch with the rest; I learned to go aloft and to lay out upon a yard in a stiff topgallant breeze. I acquired all the mysteries of knotting and splicing, of serving a rope with spun-yarn, and to know the technical difference between the *rope* itself and a line. I could heave the log, box the compass, and take my "trick" at the helm with the best man on board, and thus gained the golden opinions of those among whom a rough turn of the wheel of fortune had so strangely and so suddenly cast me.

Some days after leaving the Canaries, we found ourselves passing through what seemed to be immense meadows of green stuff adrift. By moonlight the branches, leaves, and fibres of this uprooted marine forest—for such it was, being wrack and

seaweeds of wondrous length springing from the lowest depths of the ocean—sparkled, flashed, and whirled in the foaming eddies astern of the brig as she cleft or brushed down the yielding masses with her rushing keel.

I was never weary of surveying this scene, which was so marvellous in its beauty, when the moon was shining on the sea.

These vast broad leaves and long snaky tendrils that danced upon the surface of the sea were the Florida gulf-weed.

“The tropical grape of the sailors,” said Hislop, as we leaned over the lee-quarter one evening. “These plants grow upon the two great banks of the Atlantic, and were known to the Phœnicians, who named them the Weedy Sea.”

“I remember,” said I; “and that the seamen of Columbus thought they were sent by Heaven to stay their course.”

“You are right,” replied the mate, with an approving smile. “It is pleasant to meet one like you, Rodney, who has read that which is worth reading and remembers it.”

“The Gulf Stream,” said Weston, joining in the conversation, “is a great current about sixty miles broad, caused by the trade winds, which always blow from east to west. It issues from the Gulf between Cape Florida and Cuba, and runs at the

rate of three knots an hour along the shores of South and North America, till the Newfoundland bank turns it to the south-east ; so everywhere its track is known by that gulf-weed which you now see floating past."

It is by this mysterious current,—this mighty river that traverses the ocean—that the timber logs of the St. Lawrence, the wrecks of the old plate argosies, and the carved idols of older Mexico and the Caribbean isles, all covered with the weeds and barnacles of long immersion, have been cast upon the western shores of Scotland and the Hebrides.

Every morning the weather became warmer—the sea and sky more clear—the atmosphere more rarefied. The wind was so steady that scarcely a sheet or tack were altered. Thus for several days we bore on with both sheets aft, as the phrase is, when running right before the wind.

Shoals of porpoises plunged across the bows of the brig in the sapphire-coloured sea, and when it was smooth a whole fleet of the little nautilus passed us with purple sails up ; nor were the dark and gliding shark and the silvery flying-fish wanting at times to keep my attention excited ; and the tiny petrels, as they came tripping along, half in water and half in air, kept pace with the *Eugenie*, as she cracked on under a press of sail, dashing the waves around her, ploughing so freely and so fear-

lessly the deep waters that hide a finny world, and wash the dark and unknown basements of the earth.

One glorious morning, when we were within a few days' sail of Hispaniola, there occurred a circumstance which was afterwards a source of the deepest regret to us all ; how and why, will be shown during the progress of my story.

The day was fine, even for that region of fine days. The *Eugenie* was running smoothly before the wind, and Hislop, with considerable animation, was detailing to the captain and me the appearance of that rare phenomenon a lunar rainbow, which by singular good fortune he had once seen in these latitudes, and which Aristotle declares is never seen but at the time of the full moon—a declaration which our learned Scotch mate treated with contempt ; for he was a strange fellow, this Marc Hislop, and could with equal facility dilate on the Apology of Plato, and the method of club-hauling a square-rigged vessel, or sheering her to her anchor in a gale of wind ; on the Prometheus of Æschylus, or the proper mode of lying to in a hurricane, with everything struck aloft, and topsail-yards on the cap ; and now, on the subject of the lunar rainbow, he was proceeding to quote from the *Portuguese Pilot* of Ramusio, when Weston interrupted him by hailing aloft.

"Fore-top—there !"

"Aye, aye, sir," was the usual response from Ned Carlton, a seaman who was perched in the top.

"What are you about ?" asked Weston, angrily.

"Greasing the sling of the fore-yard, sir."

"Oh—I thought you were making hay, you are so slow about it. You have been staring ahead for the last twenty minutes at least."

"Because I think I see something," said the seaman, annoyed by the nautical taunt.

"Something," reiterated Weston, "what is it ? a church, or a windmill going before the wind ?"

"Neither, sir—but a boat adrift."

"How does it bear, Ned ?" asked Hislop, starting into the rigging.

"On the starboard bow, about two miles off."

On hearing this the telescope was resorted to, and we could plainly enough see a white object, which the intervening waves, as they rose and fell, hid from us at times ; and there was a great diversity of opinion, for one of the crew maintained it was a harbour buoy adrift.

"It must have drifted a long way to have come here," retorted Carlton ; "and if you have your grandmother's spectacles about you, wipe them clean, put them on, and look again—for I can see plainly enough that it *is* a boat."

"Then we shall overhaul it," said Weston ;

"Hislop, prepare to lower ours, and to lay the fore-yard aback."

The *Eugenie's* course was shaped towards it, and when within a quarter of a mile, the foresail was laid to the mast, the brig hove in the wind, and the stern boat lowered ; Hislop, Tom Lambourne, two other hands, and I, manned her, and put off to inspect and report upon what we could discover. And so, with many surmises as to wrecks, boats getting adrift or being washed away from their davits, and so forth, we pulled swiftly towards her, all stripped to our shirt-sleeves, for a hot West Indian sun was blazing in a cloudless sky, and the air seemed still and breathless.

CHAPTER XVII.

ANTONIO EL CUBANO.

As the strange boat pitched about on the waves some of our men asserted that, at times, they could see a man's head above the gunwale. Others expressed their doubts of this, and in the midst of such discussions we sheered alongside. Hislop caught its bow by the boat-hook, and while retaining his hold, fended off, to prevent her being dashed against ours.

In the bottom of this boat, which was evidently the clinker-built skiff of a merchant vessel, and was all painted yellow, as a preservation from the sun in a warm climate, there lay under the thwarts a man, either asleep, in a stupor, or dead,—at first we knew not which ; but he was pale enough to have passed for the last.

By his tawny visage and coal-black beard, his long scarlet cap and sash, in which a sheathed knife was stuck, and also by the rings in his ears, we

recognised him to be a Spanish seaman. He was a man naturally of a tall and powerful frame, but of forbidding aspect—of great personal strength, but wasted apparently by toil, by exposure and famine.

A dark and coagulated crust of something like blood appeared on his baked lips and thick moustaches, on the blackness of which the saline particles of the sea foam, dried by the tropical sun, glittered white as hoar frost on a bush in winter.

As we roused him, he grasped his knife instinctively and repulsively, but relinquished it, and then stared wildly at us, muttering in imploring tones,

“Aqua, aqua, por amor de Dios !”—(water, for the love of God). “Misericordia ! O senores—O Ave Maria, misericordia !”

“Here, Jack Spaniard, ship a drop o’ this ; it is the real Jamaiky,” said Tattooed Tom, pouring between the parched lips of the Spaniard some rum from a bottle, which most likely had been put in the boat by the foresight of Hislop.

The black eyes of the castaway dilated and flashed as the spirit revived him, restoring his wasted energies and bringing a hectic colour to his cheek.

“Belay now,” said Tom ; “you must get some Thames water from the brig before you take more of this.”

“Muchos gracias—many, many thanks,” said the Spaniard, in tones of thankfulness.

“Enough o’ that ;—stow your slack, and come on board if you can,” said Tom, testily, as he had sulky recollections of our adventures at the Grand Canary.

Restored by the mouthful of alcohol, the Spaniard staggered up, but with difficulty ; and then we perceived that gouts of blood, dried and encrusted by the sun, were on his person and on the inside of the boat, especially on one of the thwarts.

“What is this—blood ?” asked Hislop, with an imperceptible shudder.

The Spaniard started, and became, if possible, paler at the question, as he nervously clutched the gunwale of his boat with both hands, and said, in broken accents—

“My dog, senores ; I killed a dog that was with me, because—because it went mad in the hot sunshine, and being without water.”

“Why did you not throw it into the sea ?”

“It would have bitten me, senor, and might perhaps have come into the boat again.”

“Likely enough,” muttered one of our men.

“You could have knocked it over with an oar,” said Hislop ; “but did your dog wear *this* ?” he added, fishing up with the boat-hook a cap that lay in the bilge water under the stern sheets of the skiff.

"That cap is mine," said the Spaniard, in a husky voice, while closing his eyes, as if wearied or appalled.

"Have you two heads?" asked Hislop, sternly.

"No, senor ; but—but—"

"What then?"

"A man may have *two* caps for all that."

Perceiving that he was on the point of sinking again, Tom Lambourne poured some more of the rum into his mouth, and we dragged him into our boat, setting the skiff, which was quite useless to us, adrift once more.

"What was your ship?" asked Hislop, who spoke Spanish fluently.

"The *Marshal Serrano*—a Spanish brig from Cadiz."

"From the Canaries last?" I inquired, hastily.

"Yes ; bound to Costa Rica."

Tom Lambourne gave me a rapid glance, as he spat on his hands and pushed his oar through the rowlock.

"She foundered and went down with all hands on board," continued the famished Spaniard, in a broken voice and with quivering lips.

"*All*?" reiterated Hislop, sternly and dubiously.

"All, save myself, senor," replied the other, hesitatingly, and lowering his hollow eyes ; "I escaped in the skiff."

"With your dog?"

"Si, senor."

"In what latitude did this take place?"

Without a moment's hesitation, the Spaniard gave us the latitude and longitude.

"I can't make out this fellow's story in any way," said Hislop, in English. "By the theory and law of storms, we should have had a touch of the same gale which foundered his brig—if such a gale existed. He has deserted, or been marooned. I don't believe a word he says. What is your name?" he asked, in Spanish.

"Antonio."

I started on hearing it, for my suspicions were becoming more and more confirmed.

"Antonio. What more?"

"El Cubano, or the Cuban; for so my shipmates termed me, and I have no other name."

"Quick, my lads," said Hislop; "lay out on your oars."

We were soon alongside the *Eugenie*, and had our castaway hoisted on board, when, for a time, an end was put to our queries, but not to our surmises, by his becoming insensible. We had questioned him already perhaps too much, considering the weakness of his condition.

He adhered to his original story in every particular when examined by Weston and Hislop a

day or two after ; that he belonged to the Spanish merchant brig, *Marshal Serrano*, the same craft which had worked with us out of the roadstead of Santa Cruz ; that she had foundered in a storm, being overmasted and overladen, and that he alone had escaped of all the crew ; that when his dog became mad, he had slain the animal and cast the carcase into the sea ; and that he had been a week floating about in an open boat, without food and without aught to cool his parched tongue, save the heavy tropical dew of heaven, when we found him ; and to the truth of all this he was ready to swear over two crossed knives, in the fashion of his country.

In short, we were obliged to content ourselves with his narrative, which Hislop duly engrossed in the ship's log, while expressing great disbelief as to its authenticity.

In the first place, our mate denied that any such storm as that in which the Cuban alleged his brig perished had ever existed ; and he deduced from his favourite theory that we were, and had been, in the direct *track* of such a storm, and must have felt its influence long ere this.

Hence he thought it more probable that the man had deserted in the night, perhaps in consequence of committing some crime, or for the same reason had been marooned and set adrift.

The crew were divided in opinion, and Tom Lambourne openly expressed his disbelief that the blood which covered the clothes of the Cuban and the thwart of the boat ever came from the veins of a dog; and others asserted that he must have quarrelled with an unfortunate shipmate, and killed him; or had perhaps assassinated him in sleep for the horrible purpose of prolonging his own existence.

Amid these unpleasant surmises as to his character and position, in a few days the Spaniard joined the crew in working the ship, and proved himself to be a steady, industrious, and able seaman; and as three of our hands were on the sick list his services were the more valuable.

On remarking this to Tom Lambourne,

"It is all very true, sir," he replied; "but I don't like a seaman who cannot look his shipmate right in the face."

"You are a physiognomist," I suggested.

"Don't know what kind of *mist* that may be, Master Rodney; but this I know—there is always something cunning and dangerous in a fellow who looks *over* your shoulder, as that Spaniard does, when he should look at your eyes."

Antonio had an excessive dislike for deck duty by night. He exhibited a strange dread of being left alone, and could scarcely be prevailed upon to

look over the vessel's side, always shrinking back, as if he expected to see something hideous rise out of the sea. Weston suggested that perhaps his recent suffering had unmanned and rendered him nervous ; but the crew thought otherwise.

In his sleep, Antonio frequently disturbed the men in the forecastle bunks by his mutterings, his wild dreams, outcries, and sonorous Spanish maledictions.

I was at the wheel on a calm and lovely night (it was the 13th of January), when we were off the beautiful shore of Hispaniola. I remember well that Cape Samanna bore west by south, and Cape Cabron west by north ; for my task of steering was new to me, and Weston's orders were "to keep her full and by,"—that is, as close to the wind as possible without making the canvas shiver.

I could see the lights that glittered in the distant villages that studded the low but fertile peninsula of Samanna. All was still and quiet in the ship and around it. Soothed by the solemnity of the hour and the vast solitude of the sea, my heart was full, and busy memory brought before me loved faces and voices, places and scenes, that were far, far away in dear Old England.

The brig was gliding through the water rapidly but imperceptibly, and almost without a sound ; the men of the watch were leaning over the bul-

wark to leeward ; and the air, the sea, and all aloft and below, seemed to sleep in the moonlight ; not a reef point pattered on the taut canvas, and scarcely a wavelet rippled, save in the dead-water astern that marked the white wake of the *Eugenie*.

Suddenly a shrill and piercing cry rang out upon the night, and Antonio the Cubano rushed from the forecastle with the wildest terror expressed in his black eyes ; his visage was pale and ghastly, and the perspiration glittered like bead drops on his clammy brow. With his bare feet, he stumbled over the chain cable, which lay coiled on the deck, for on that afternoon we had hauled it up, and bent it to the working anchor.

He came running aft in his shirt, brandishing a knife in his hand, and exclaiming, in fierce and then imploring accents—

“ Who says I did it ?—who dares to say so ? ”

Then letting his arms drop as he slunk back to his bunk, we heard him groan out—

“ *El cuchillo—el cuchillo !* ” (the knife—the knife).

Hence, under such circumstances, it may easily be supposed that among the crew there floated strange and dark surmises as to the past life of Antonio el Cubano.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WATER-SPOUT.

As the sun increased in heat, notwithstanding the season of the year, I was soon sensible of the comfort of white clothing, when contrasted with dark woollen or broadcloth, as the latter absorbs, and the former repels, the rays of the sun.

Marc Hislop illustrated this to me by igniting paper with a burning-glass; whenever the focus was brought to bear upon dark places, such as the printed letters, they were instantly consumed.

We ran along the coast of Hispaniola, and saw the wavy ridges of its mountains that tower into the clouds; we sighted Tortuga, a rocky island covered with palm-trees and sandal-wood, but surrounded by reefs and shoals; and rounding Cape St. Nicholas, stood to the southward between the great islands of Jamaica and Cuba, but without seeing either of them at that time.

For three days we had dark and cloudy weather.

About three P.M. on the 24th of January, a small speck, which appeared to the westward on our weather beam, grew rapidly into a gloomy cloud, and swiftly, as if on the wings of a destroying angel, it traversed the thickening air and the agitated sea, which darkened beneath its shadow ; and so this speck came on, until it grew an awful thunder-cloud.

“ Bear a hand fore and aft ! Hurrah, my lads !— make all snug before the tempest breaks !” were the cheering orders of Weston, Hislop, and Lambourne, as the brig was prepared to encounter a heavy squall.

The rain soon fell in torrents, impeding the men at their work of close reefing, furling, and stowing some of the heavier canvas, and in tightly belaying the running rigging ; for when loose ropes are flying about in a tempest, and cracking in men’s faces like coach-whips, they become sufficiently bewildering to impede the working of the ship.

Under the lower edge of the approaching cloud, when about twelve miles distant, we beheld an object which filled us with wonder and awe.

It was a tremendous spout, or column, of water, connected with the cloud above and the sea below (the sea, from which a circular wind had sucked it upward), that was now visible.

This column was like a *solid mass of white breakers*,

approaching with incredible speed over waves that began to rise in short and pyramidal peaks.

Hislop was too busy clewing up canvas, sending yards down from aloft, belaying and ordering, and so lost a famous opportunity for expatiating—as no doubt he would have done—on the *theory* of these spouts; for this phenomenon filled us with the greatest alarm, lest it might swoop down upon the *Eugenie*, dismast and destroy her like a child's toy-ship.

Antonio el Cubano, being the most powerful and muscular man on board, was ordered to the wheel.

Across the sea this column seemed to pass with the cloud, boiling, foaming, and with the sound of a mighty cascade pouring into a deep valley, but yet maintaining a position quite perpendicular. Around its base the waves seemed in dreadful commotion, rising and falling, seething and glittering in the lightning which shot at times from the gloomy bosom of the cloud that floated over them.

As this terrible phenomenon approached from the westward, Captain Weston conceived that we might escape its influence by altering the brig's course, and so passing it. I have heard of water-spouts being dissipated by the effect of heavily-shotted guns; but we had no such appliances—at least we had no shot on board.

The breeze, which was blowing fresh, and had not as yet become a gale (to us at least), veered north-westerly ; so we shook the reefs out of our topsails and trimmed sharp by the wind.

“Luff, luff—keep your luff—keep her to,” were the incessant orders of Weston ; and the *Eugenie* flew through the water like a race-horse ; held by the powerful hands of Antonio, she never yawed an inch ; and by especial Providence she got *to windward* of that dreadful phenomenon, which passed us, cloud and all, about six miles astern, when as it changed colour, from greyish green to white, it presented a scene so sublime and terrible that “the boldest held his breath for a time ;” and Antonio, who was blanched white with terror, though he had frequently seen such spouts in these, his native seas, assured me, with chattering teeth, that he had never beheld one of such magnitude ; and it was long before he could be certain of our safety and ceased to mutter—

“O mala ventura—mala ventura !” (literally, bad luck.)

From white the water-spout became dusky purple, when a gleam of the setting sun fell on it, and the waves at its base glittered in all the colours of the rainbow.

“Thank heaven ! that is past,” said Weston.

“Ay, sir,” said old Roberts, the man-o’-war’s

man, "it is enough to make one's hair stand on end for a week."

"Had we been twenty minutes' sail *astern*, we could not have escaped it!" said Hislop; "but we have handled the brig beautifully. That ugly Spaniard at the wheel was worth his weight in gold just now!"

For nearly an hour the sea was greatly agitated; but as the *Eugenie*, still braced sharp to the wind, flew from one long roller to another, we rapidly got into smooth water. The barometer rose quickly; the vapours dispersed; and when the setting sun gave us a parting smile from the far horizon, the storm-cloud and its water-spout had disappeared together, or melted away in the distant sea.

The little eddies of wind, which on a fine summer morning may be seen whirling up the dust and dry leaves in circles on a road, are exactly on the same principle as those mighty phenomena which become tornadoes, cyclones, and water-spouts, when they reach the ocean, where they may easily dismast and perhaps sink the largest line-of-battle ship.

Those spouts rise from the sea exactly like the moving pillars of sand, which the whirlwinds sweep from the hot and arid deserts of Africa and Arabia.

About six bells (*i.e.*, seven P.M.), this escape was followed by a dead calm, which lasted till midnight,

and during that time we talked of nothing but the skill with which we had got the weathergage of that column of foam. As the sun set, with a rapidity peculiar to these latitudes, the brilliant tints he shed on sea and sky changed with equal speed from gold to saffron, from these to vivid purple, and from thence to the hue of sapphire.

The sensation of loneliness which the departure of the sun excites in the breast of a landsman at sea is peculiar ; but this was soon chased from mine by the splendour of the rising moon, which changed the sapphire tints of sea and sky to liquid silver and the clearest blue.

Above, no cloud, nor even the tiniest shred of vapour, was visible. Sea blended with sky at the horizon, and seemed to melt into each other, so that no line was traceable. Save a planet or two, twinkling with less light than usual, there seemed to be no stars in heaven, for the glory of the full-orbed moon eclipsed them all ; her light fell brightly on the white sails of the *Eugenie*, and in it the features of our faces were distinct as at noon-day, and now it was the noon of night.

About twelve o'clock a fresh breeze sprung up, and the ship's course was resumed.

"By keeping the weathergage, and beyond the circle of the spout's attraction, we escaped without shipping a drop of water !" said Weston, for the

twentieth time. "Let me see how you enter all this in the log, Hislop."

"It is no uncommon thing for a craft at sea to be deluged by a spout of *fresh* water, which the whirlwind has torn up from an inland lake," said Hislop; "and houses, far in-shore, have in the same fashion been deluged by salt water absorbed from the sea;—and hence the showers of dried herrings, of which we have heard so much at times. Now, Rodney, you will perhaps be surprised when I tell you, that it is the winds which produce a calm like that we have had to-night."

"The winds!" I reiterated, surprised at such a paradox from our theorist.

"Yes. The opposition of winds will at times produce a perfect calm, and then when rain falls it is always gentle and equable; but when clouds seem to move *against* the lower winds, or when streams of air denote a variety of the aerial current, and consequently the approach of rain——"

"What strange sound is that ahead, or at least, forward?" said Weston, interrupting Hislop, who would perhaps have theorized for an hour.

"It is Antonio, groaning in his sleep in the forecabin," said Ned Carleton, who was at the wheel.

"I wish the ship were rid of him and his dreams," added Hislop, testily. "Well, as I was saying,

when the adverse movements of the clouds seem to denote——”

“Light a-head !” cried a voice from the bow.

“Is that you, Roberts ?” asked Weston, while Hislop stamped with vexation at the second interruption.

“Yes, sir.”

“How does it bear ?”

“East-north-east.”

“Then it is Cape St. Antonio Light, the most western point of Cuba,” said Weston, with confidence and pleasure in his tone. “I thought I could smell the land with the first cat’s-paw, before the breeze freshened.”

The light, dim and distant like a star, was now seen to twinkle among the waves at the horizon.

For more than an hour I remained on deck with my eyes fixed upon that feeble but increasing beacon, which indicated a foreign shore ; then I went below and turned in, with a sigh of pleasure that the voyage was nearly over, and a hope that when I traversed those waves again, I should be on my return home—home to my father and mother, to Sybil and Dot,—to the old Rectory, with its shady oak-grove, its green lawn, and the masses of ivy, woodbine, and honeysuckle that shaded its time-worn walls !

CHAPTER XIX.

CUBA.

WHEN day dawned we had rounded Caybo San Antonio, and were running along the northern shore of Cuba.

I was up early, by eight bells—or a little after four A.M.—for I had the morning watch ; and with deep interest I surveyed the coast of that beautiful island, which lay about ten miles distant—the first and now the *last* portion of that vast empire beyond the seas which Columbus bequeathed to Castile and Leon.

“Dat is mi country, senor,” said Antonio, who was at the wheel ; and this remark, with the repulsive aspect of the Spaniard and his mysterious character, served to dissipate my momentary enthusiasm.

“That is Caybo Bueno Vista,—and the breakers on the weather-bow,” he continued, “mark the Collorados, a long reef of rocks. The blue sharks are as thick there as the stars in the sky.”

We were now in the Gulf of Florida.

The sky was cloudless and blue ; and now it seemed as if the welkin above and the almost waveless sea below were endeavouring to outvie each other in calmness, in beauty, and in the glory of their azure depths. The wind was off the land and rather a-head ; but the sails were trimmed to perfection, and we ran through the Gulf on a taut bowline.

I have so much more to narrate than my limited space permits me to give in full detail, that I must compress into one chapter all that relates to my visit to Matanzas.

Our run through the Gulf was delightful ; and on the 29th of January, just as a rosy tint was stealing over all the sea and the rocky shore of Cuba, after the sun had set beyond the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, we saw Havanna light, bearing south by west, and distant about fourteen miles. So we passed in the night the wealthy capital of Cuba, so famed in the annals of our victories—*La Habana*, or the harbour—of which, from our being so far to seaward, we could see nothing but the great revolving light, which burns so brightly on the high rock of the Morro, or *Castello de los Santos Reyes* ; and before dawn we descried the light of Santa Cruz on our weather-bow.

Weston drew my attention to it, adding, “that

is the beacon which so scared me when it shone through the stern windows of the empty polacca brig."

Next day, the 29th, after encountering a head wind, against which we tacked frequently between the Pan de Matanzas and the wooded point of Sumberella, at ten in the morning, a Spanish mulatto pilot came on board and took the brig in charge.

We ran safely into the harbour, and by eleven o'clock came to anchor at a place recommended by Antonio, half a cable's length from the castle of St. Severino. In half an hour after, the sails were all unbent and stowed below, and preparations were made for "breaking bulk"—to unload the vessel, whose cargo, I have stated, consisted of steam machinery and coals for the sugar and coffee mills.

Gangs of Spanish mulattoes, negro porters, and lumpers, in red shirts and white drawers, with broad straw hats, and nearly all with rings in their ears, came on board in quest of employment; and then all was confusion, garlic, dirt, jabbering in Spanish and Congo, singing, swearing, and smoking cigaritos.

I was now at liberty to go ashore, and after the first bustle was over, Weston left Hislop in charge of the brig and accompanied me. Matanzas presented nothing new to him, but I surveyed with interest, not unmixed with wonder, the New World in which I found myself.

The city of San Carlos de Matanzas occupies a gentle eminence between the rivers San Juan and Yumuri, which roll into the bay from the mountainous ridge that traverses all Cuba. Its name, Matanzas, signifies the place of murder, because in that bay some of the Spaniards of Columbus were slain by the native Indians.

Most of the houses are built of good stone, but have all their windows iron-barred without and barricaded within, for the population (of which our shipmate Antonio was a striking specimen) consists of about thirty thousand olive-skinned Spaniards, and double that number of slaves and free mulattoes, all loose, reckless, fiery, and apt to use their knives on trivial occasions.

There was not a ship lying there for England, or any other craft by which Weston could have sent me home. A Spanish steam-packet was on the eve of departing for Cadiz ; but being wearied by the monotony of my long voyage, I was scarcely in a mood for the sea again, and wished to spend a little time on shore instead of leaving with her.

However, I wrote to my family by the Spanish mail, acquainting them of my safety—with the strange accident which had so suddenly torn me from them, and adding that I would return by the first ship bound for any part of England ; if possible,

with the *Eugenie*, which would probably be freighted for London.

After the packet sailed with my letter in her capacious bags, I experienced an emotion of greater happiness and contentment than I had ever done since leaving home; for the sorrow which I knew all there must have suffered, and would still be suffering, hung heavily on my heart.

As we were returning to the brig, which had now been warped alongside the mole, when passing through the street which contains the great hospital, we heard the sound of trumpets, and saw the glittering of lances with long streamers above the heads of a dense crowd of people of all shades of colour, black, yellow, and brown; and we had to doff our hats with due respect as they passed, for in the midst, surrounded by a staff of officers, epauletted and aiguletted, their breasts sparkling with medals and crosses, and each of them riding with a cocked hat under his right arm, came the present Captain-General of Cuba, a marshal of the Spanish army, Don Francisco Serrano de Dominguez, attended by an escort of mulatto lancers, all mounted on Spanish horses.

He was a fine-looking man, and though aged, had all the bearing of what he was, or I should say, *is*—a grandee of Old Castile.

On returning to the *Eugenie* we found Antonio, the Cuban, working among the crew as lustily and actively as any man on board. Weston now offered him remuneration for the time he had been with us, with a hint that he might find a berth elsewhere ; but our castaway evinced the greatest reluctance to leave the brig, and begged that he might be permitted to remain on board, as three of our best hands had been sent ashore sick to the hospital.

So short-sighted is man, that Captain Weston, despite the dislike of the crew, and the advice of Marc Hislop, ordered that the name of Antonio be entered on the ship's books as a foremast-man.

Three weeks after our arrival, the brig was careened to starboard, when clear of all the cargo, and had her copper scraped and cleaned, an operation which the constant rains of the season greatly retarded.

There was much in Cuba to feed an imaginative mind, and mine was full of the voyages, the daring adventures, and the vast discoveries of Columbus, with the exploits of the buccaneers whose haunts were amid these wild, and in those days, savage shores.

I thought of the gaily plumed and barbarously armed caciques whom Columbus had met in their

fleet *piroguas*, or had encountered in the dense forests which clothe the Cuban mountains—forests, old, perhaps, as the days of the deluge—of the yellow-skinned women with their long, flowing black hair, and with plates of polished gold hanging at their ears and noses ; of the fierce warriors streaked with sable war-paint, and armed with cane arrows shod with teeth or poisoned fish-bones, that fell harmless from the Spanish coats of mail ; of the wild Caribs who devoured their prisoners—with whom a battle was but a precursor of a feast ; and of the famous fighting women—the terrible Amazons of Guadeloupe.

I thought of the story of Columbus writing the narrative of his wonderful discoveries, his perils and adventures, on a roll of parchment, which he wrapped in oil-cloth covered over with wax, enclosed in a little cask, and then cast into the sea, with a prayer, and the hope that if *he* and his crew perished, this record of their achievements might be cast by the ocean on the shore of some Christian land.

As I sat by the sounding sea that rolled into the bay of Matanzas, what would I not have given to have seen the waves cast that old cask, covered with weeds and barnacles, at my feet !

But now the plodding steam-tug and the rusty merchant trader ploughed the waters of the bay,

instead of the gilded Spanish caravels or the long war piroguas of the Indian warriors ; and where they fought their bloodiest battles on the wooded shore, or in the green savannah, where the painted cacique and the mailed Castilian met hand to hand in mortal strife, the smoke of the steam-mill, grinding coffee or boiling sugar, darkened the sky, and the songs of the negroes were heard as they hoed in the plantations, or in gangs of forty trucked mahogany logs, each drawn by eight sturdy oxen, to the sea.

And so, in a creek of the bay—the same place where the Dutch Admiral Heyn sunk the Spanish plate fleet—I was wont to sit dreamily for hours, with the murmur of the waves in my ears, with the buzz of insects, and the voice of the mocking-birds among the palmettoes, while watching the sails that glided past the headlands of the bay, on their way to the Bahama Channel or the great Gulf of Florida.

This was my favourite resort. A wood of coconut and other trees shaded the place, and made it so dark that I have seen the fire-flies glance about at noon. The cocoas are about the height of Dutch poplars, and are covered with oblong leaves, which, when young, are of a pale red. As spring drew on, the branches became covered with scarlet and yellow flowers.

Over these the vast coral-tree spread its protecting foliage, whence the Spaniards, in their beautiful language, name it *La Madre del Cocoa*, the smallest of which has at times a thousand lovely scarlet blossoms.

CHAPTER XX.

AN EVIL SPIRIT.

WE sailed from the bay of Matanzas at two A.M. on the 3rd of April, bound for the Cape of Good Hope, which we were fated never to reach.

The *Eugenie* had been freighted for that colony with a rich cargo of molasses, sugar, coffee, and tobacco ; and arrangements had been made that from Cape Town she would be chartered for London ; thus I had a fair prospect of seeing nearly a half of this terrestrial globe before I re-passed my good old father's threshold at Erlesmere.

I earnestly hoped that we might encounter no more water-spouts or tornadoes, as they were not at all to my taste ; but from other causes than phenomena or the war of the elements, it was my fortune, or rather misfortune, to undergo such peril and suffering as were far beyond my conception or anticipation.

By eight o'clock on the morning of our departure

the light on Piedras Key was bearing south by east, sinking into the waves astern, and going out as we bade a long farewell to the lovely shores of Cuba.

Three of our men had died of yellow fever in hospital, so we sailed from Matanzas with ten able-bodied hands, exclusive of three ship-boys, the captain, first and second mates.

In these waters, after the rainy season, the sky is so cloudless in the forenoon that the heat of the sun becomes almost insupportable ; thus we were soon glad to resort to the use of windsails rigged down the open skylight to an awning over the quarter-deck for coolness, and to skids for the prevention of blisters on the sides of the brig ; but in the starry night the land-wind which comes off these fertile isles, laden with the rich aroma of their spice-growing savannahs, is beyond description grateful and delicious.

Without any incident worth recording we ran through the sea of the Windward Isles, thence along the coast of South America ; and when we approached the calm latitudes, as that tract of ocean near the Equator is named, we became sensible of the overpowering increase of heat, while the breezes were but "fanning ones," as the sailors term those which, under the double influence of the air and motion of the hull, are just sufficient to make the lighter canvas collapse and swell again.

We were soon aware of other annoyances than mere heat ; for now it seemed as if there was an evil spirit on board the *Eugenie*, and that nothing went right within or about her.

The crew sulked and quarrelled among themselves as if the demon of mischief lurked in the vessel, and daily something unfortunate occurred. Hal-yards or braces gave way, by which the yards were thrown aback ; and in one instance the brig nearly lost her mainmast. Standing and running rigging were found to be mysteriously fretted, and even cut, as if by a knife ; and then the crew whispered together of Antonio el Cubano—that horrid, dark, and mysterious fellow, whose character none of us could fathom.

Twice our compasses went wrong, and remained so for days ; and before the cause was discovered, the *Eugenie* had drifted far from her course.

This varying was inexplicable, until Hislop, who set himself to watch, and frequently saw Antonio hovering near the binnacle at night, unshipped the compass-box, and found there were concealed near it an iron marlinspike on one side, and a lump of tallow on the other, either of which was sufficient to affect the magnetic needle.

After their removal the compass worked as well as before. The crew were strictly questioned ; all vowed total ignorance of the transaction, and

Antonio summoned every saint in the Spanish calendar to attest *his* innocence, but none, however, appeared. The crew now felt convinced that, inspired by some emotion of malice or mischief, *he* alone was the culprit ; and if not loud, their **wrath** was deep against him.

These variations of our compass set the **busy** brain of Marc Hislop to work ; and in a day or two he declared that he had discovered a plan for preventing the repetition of tricks so dangerous, by *insulating* the needle, so as to protect the compass from attractions false or dangerous.

I am uncertain whether he perfected this experiment, but Antonio soon went to work **another** way ; for one day, when he was supposed to be busy in the maintop, he shouted, "Stand from under !" and ere Hislop, who was just beneath, could give the usual response, "Let go," a heavy marlinspike, the same which had been found in the binnacle, slipped from the hand of Antonio, and fell through the topgrating.

The iron bar crashed into the deck at the feet of Hislop ; whether this occurred by inadvertence or design we knew not, but the Scotsman thought the latter.

"That rascally Spanish picaroon will work **us** some serious mischief before we overhaul **our** ground-tackle or see the Cape," said Weston, **who**

was enraged by this new incident, and the narrow escape of Hislop, for whom he had a great regard.

"Aye, he has a hang-dog look about him that I never liked," replied the latter. "He seems to be always down by the head, somehow. We should have left him in his skiff, just as we found him, like a bear adrift on a grating, or a pig in a washing-tub."

On another occasion he injured Will White, one of the crew, by letting the topmaul fall from the foretop, where it usually lay, for driving home the fid of the mast.

His dreams again became a source of annoyance to all in the forecastle bunks ; and on being closely and severely questioned by Captain Weston and the men, as to whether he had ever killed any one, by accident or otherwise, after being long badgered, he half drew his ugly knife from its shark-skin sheath, and replied, sullenly—

"Only a Chinaman or so, when in California."

"Well, I wish you would clap a stopper on your mouth when you go to sleep, or turn in out of ear-shot in a topgallant studding-sail—as far off as you choose, and the further off the better," said old Roberts, sulkily, after the ravings of the Cubano had kept him awake for several nights.

"You seem to dream a great deal, Antonio," said

Weston, with a keen glance, beneath which the Spaniard quailed.

"Si, Senor Capitano," he stammered.

"How is this?"

"I am very fond of dreams," he replied, with a bitter smile on his lip and a scowl in his dark eye.

"Have you pleasant ones?"

"I cannot say that they are always so, but I should like to procure them."

"Shall I tell you how to do so, shipmate?"

"If you please, Senor," growled the Spaniard.

"Go to sleep, if you can, with that which is better than the formula of prayers, which at times you pay out like the line running off a log-reel."

"And what is it you mean, mio Capitano?"

"*A good conscience*," replied Weston, with a peculiar emphasis.

A black scowl came over the Spaniard's swarthy visage, as he touched the rim of his hat, darted a furious glance at his chief accuser, the white-haired seaman Roberts, and, to end the examination, walked forward.

Soon after this, when evening came on, we heard a noise in the forecastle, and the voice of Hislop, exclaiming—

"Stand clear—sheer off, Antonio! If you come athwart me, I'll knock you down with a handspike! What! you grip your knife, do you? Well, just do

it again, and I'll chuck you overboard like a bit of old junk."

"What is the matter now?" said I, hastening forward.

"Oh, this rascally Spanish creole has been swearing at the men again, and threatening old Roberts."

"He vows, sir, he will burn the ship," said Roberts, who seemed considerably excited.

"Burn the ship!" reiterated Weston. I have a great mind to put him in the bilboes for the remainder of the voyage."

"'Twere best for all concerned, sir," said Tom Lambourne, touching his forelock with his right hand, and giving the deck a scrape with his left foot; "or set him adrift with some provisions in the jolly-boat."

"Come, come, Antonio," said Weston, with greater severity than I had hitherto seen expressed in his open and honest countenance, "you must haul your wind—for some time you have been going too far. I can't spare my jolly-boat, and, thank heaven! the days of marooning are past among British sailors, but beware you, shipmate, or the bilboes it shall be, and we have a pretty heavy pair below. And as for you, Marc Hislop," he added, in a low voice, when we walked aft, "take care of yourself, for these Spanish creoles are as slippery and treacherous as serpents."

"I'll keep my weather eye open," said Hislop.

"You will require to do so, I think."

"You do?" exclaimed the Scotsman, with growing anger. "If he proceeds thus, I'll break either his heart or his neck."

Next morning, Roberts, the old man-o'-war's man, who had always been Antonio's chief accuser concerning his dreams, was nowhere to be found on board!

All the hands were turned up; the whole brig was searched, the forecastle berths, the cable-tier, and every place below from the fore to the after peak, but there was no trace of Roberts, save his old tarpaulin-hat, lying crushed and torn in the lee scuppers.

He was last seen when turned up to take the middle watch, which extends from twelve to four o'clock A.M., and Antonio was then in his hammock.

Roberts was entered in the log as "having fallen overboard in the night;" but his loss cast a terrible gloom over all in the ship. Suspicion grew apace, and seemed to become confirmed, as open war was soon declared between the crew and Antonio.

Every man was ready to take *his* "trick" at the wheel, rather than trust the *Eugenie* to his steering in the night, lest he might let her broach to, and lose her spars, or do some other mischief; and no man, if he could avoid it, would lay out on the yard

beyond him. No man would walk on the same side of the deck with him, or exchange a word, or a light for a pipe, or use the same cup or plate ; so he was generally to be seen, leaning moodily and alone, against the windlass-bitts, with his black eyes fixed on the horizon, as if he expected a sail or something else to heave in sight.

We shall soon see how all this ended.

CHAPTER XXI.

WE CROSS THE LINE.

WE were now in the latitudes of burning days, of starry nights, and bright blue seas. The winds were light, and, as usual near the line, there was a tremendous swell upon the ocean, which rose in long and slowly-heaving hills, without foam or ripple—smooth, glassy, and without sound.

On a lovely night, when the ocean seemed to sleep in the moonshine, we crossed the equator.

The *Eugenie* was running with the lee clews eased off—i.e., with a flowing sheet—when Father Neptune came on board, and the usual unpleasant pranks were played on those who had never passed the girdle of the world before.

Great preparations had been in progress all day in the forecastle, and these were perfected under cloud of night. All the crew were on deck save Antonio, who turned in, having probably a dread of what was about to ensue, and knowing that he was anything but a favourite.

Accompanied by the shouts of the crew, and preceded by Will White, playing "Rule Britannia" on a violin, old Father Neptune was drawn on a species of hurdle aft to the quarter-deck, where Weston stood ready to receive him, with his hat in one hand and a case-bottle of brandy in the other.

Under an old swab, which had been well dried and curled to make a wig for the son of Saturn and Vesta, I recognised the grotesquely-tattooed visage of my friend Tom Lambourne. A cutlass was stuck in his girdle, and he wore a huge paunch of canvas stuffed with oakum.

In a gown made by the sailmaker, Ned Carlton officiated as Amphitrite ; and both deities were armed with harpoons, as emblems of their dominion over the sea.

The attendant Tritons were got up in the same fashion, and all wore false noses of singular size and great brilliance, with tow wigs and long tails.

On Neptune and his goddess receiving a dram, and questioning the captain about his crew, it was discovered that Antonio and I were the only two on board who had never crossed the line before ; whereupon the Tritons whooped and danced as they laid violent hands on me. I submitted to the usual shaving and so forth with a good grace, and compounded, to avoid other annoyances, for two bottles

of brandy, and ascending to the main-cross-trees, without going through the lubber's hole. But for the Cubano there was neither ransom, escape, nor outlet ; and the poor wretch, in consequence of his mysterious antecedents, was very roughly handled, the more so that he had threatened to use his knife if molested.

It was soon trundled out of his hand by one body of Tritons, while another soused him well with salt water, as he was conveyed past the longboat, which was lashed amidships, and in which they were stationed with buckets ready filled.

Held fast on every side, he was brought before the "goddess-born" and inexorable monarch of the main, who ordered "the Lord Chief Barber at once to shave him."

Now, as Antonio had rather a luxuriant beard and moustache, the plentiful application thereto of a compound of tar and slush, such as we used for greasing the masts, was the reverse of agreeable ; but the stern orders of Neptune, which were bel-
lowed hoarsely through a tin trumpet, were faithfully and elaborately obeyed, and the contents of a dirty iron-pot were smeared over the cheeks, beard, and mouth of the Cubano, by Billy, a mischievous ship-boy, with an unsparing hand.

"Demonio ! Maldita !" were heard at intervals, and greeted with laughter ; but when he attempted

to storm or swear, the brush—a reeking tuft of oil, tar, and every horrid grease—was thrust into his mouth.

The Lord Chief Barber was now commanded to remove this noisome mess with his razor, and he scraped it off with a piece of hoop, which had been carefully notched for the purpose—a process which, as it uprooted sundry thick portions of Antonio's coal-black bristles, caused him to yell and sputter out hoarse Spanish oaths alternately.

He was again deluged with salt water; and greater severities were about to be practised upon him, as some of the Tritons cried for “the ghost of Roberts to come out of the sea;” others, to “smoke him, by putting his head in the hood of the cook's funnel,” when Weston ransomed him for two bottles of brandy, and he was permitted to slink away to his bunk, breathing vengeance against all his tormentors.

Grog was again served round, the deck was cleared for a dance, and the crew footed the hours away in a succession of hornpipes, while the grim Cubano lay growling in the forecastle. Three cheers for the Captain, and three more for Marc Hislop, terminated the fun, and all but the watch retired below.

“They have gone too far with that fellow, as some of us may discover before the voyage comes to

a close," said Hislop, when we were having a parting-glass in the cabin.

"Yes," replied Weston ; "he is a dark dog, and though I am not very rich, I would give a hundred pounds to fathom the mystery of old Roberts's disappearance. Well, here's to our wives and sweet-hearts at home."

"I have neither sweetheart nor wife," said Hislop, as he tossed off his glass ; "but I have a poor old mother who loves me as well as either could do."

Weston's eye wandered to the portraits of his wife and child, to whom he was tenderly attached, and for whom all his savings, by salary, tonnage, and hat-money,* were carefully hoarded ; for whom, poor fellow, he tempted the dangers of the great deep, the war of elements, and endured the hardships of a sailor's life—his wife, his little one, and their home—"his all ; his sheet-anchor in this world, and his guide to the next," as I once heard him say, forcibly and strangely.

* *Primage*, or "hat-money," is a small allowance paid to the master of a vessel for the care he takes of the goods with which she is laden.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CUBANO UNMASKED.

As we kept the coast of South America well aboard, a few days after we saw Cape San Roque, or, as it is sometimes named, Point Pelinga, the north-eastern extremity of Brazil, rising from the blue water like a purple cloud. But it diminished to a low black streak on our weather quarter when the sun set, and we found ourselves ploughing the waves of the Southern Atlantic.

There fell a calm for a whole day after this, and while the *Eugenie* rolled lazily on the long glassy swells, with her topsails flapping and her courses hauled up, the sole amusement of the crew consisted in catching albatrosses, or in killing them, undeterred by the old superstition that it was a bird of "good omen," or by the story of the "Ancient Mariner," of which they were probably ignorant.

A flock of these gigantic sea-birds congregated under our stern, where they gobbled up everything

that was thrown over to them ; so Hislop and I proceeded methodically to fish them on board.

We procured strong lines, baited the hooks with pieces of pork, lashing thereto a buoy formed of a common cork, and lowered four of these over the stern.

They had scarcely touched the water, when amid a furious flapping of heavy pinions, they were eagerly swallowed ; the hooks and lines began to bear tautly, and we soon had four gigantic albatrosses splashing the water into froth in their ineffectual efforts to escape.

We towed them in, hand over hand, and after measurement found the smallest to be eleven feet from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other. Though rank and fishy in flavour, the flesh of these birds was made into sea-pies, on which the crew were regaled for two days after, and they partook of it with great apparent relish. But Jack is not very particular, especially when at sea.

Though none of the crew shared the superstition connected with the destruction of an albatross, and probably none, save Hislop and myself, knew the splendid ballad written by Coleridge, it would seem as if our misfortunes commenced with *that* day's wanton sport !

The huge sea-birds became shy and left us. The sun set amid saffron-coloured waves, and the western

sky was all aflame, when the sails began to fill and collapse as the wind came in heavy puffs, causing the masts to sway from side to side, and the bellying courses to crack and flap with a sound like thunder.

At last there came a steady breeze ; the courses were let fall, and with both sheets aft, for the wind was fair, the *Eugenie* once more walked through the shining water.

Full, round, and silvery the moon arose, and tipped with liquid light every wave, that seemed to dance onward with the brig, which in half an hour had the snow-white foam flying in sheets over her catheads.

It was about the hour of one in the morning that the horrible events which I am about to relate occurred.

I was in the middle watch, relieving Weston, who, as the tropical dews were heavy, always ordered Billy the cabin boy to give me a glass of brandy-and-water before going on deck, for fear of ague, and then he turned in.

The sullen Spaniard Antonio was at the wheel. Tom Lambourne, Ned Carlton, and I, were walking to and fro, loitering at times, and looking at the compass to see how she headed—now aloft to observe how the sails drew—anon over the side, where the water bubbled merrily past, or ahead at the

patch of blue and star-studded sky which was visible under the leach of the forecourse, as the brig's bow lifted every now and then, and she rolled heavily from side to side, as all vessels do when running before the wind.

All was very still, for save the bubble of the water in the wake astern, or a gurgle as it surged up in the rudder-case, the creaking of a block, or the iron slings of the lower yards, not a sound stole upon the first hour of the silent morning.

Two of the albatrosses we had caught, were hanging by the legs from the gallows-top abaft the foremast, where their great extended wings swung somewhat mournfully to and fro in the wind and by the motion of the ship.

"Hallo!" said Tom Lambourne, suddenly looking aloft, as the topsails flapped and shivered; "she's yawing or steering wild; what is that Spaniard about?"

"But *where* is he?" added Carlton, as we now missed Antonio from the wheel; "Antonio, where are you?"

"Gone overboard, I hope," exclaimed the second mate, with something more that need not be repeated, as he rushed to the wheel, and after making it revolve a few turns rapidly, he filled the sails and steadied the brig. This was done just in time, for the *Eugenie* had a press of canvas on her, and

had she been taken aback, the consequences might have been most serious.

"Look about for the skulking lubber," said Lambourne, in great wrath, "and souse him well with a slush-bucket ; another moment and the craft would have broached to !"

"He must have crept behind the longboat, and got into the forecastle," suggested Carlton.

"I'll bring him up with a round turn for playing this trick !" grumbled Lambourne.

"Hush !" said I, as a strange sound fell upon my ear.

"What is it ?" asked the others, listening.

"A cry !—did you not hear it ?"

"No—nonsense !" said they, together.

"It was a cry that came from somewhere."

"I did hear something," said Will White ; "but it was a sheave creaking in a block aloft, I think."

"No, no," said I, pausing just by the capstan, as a terrible foreboding seized me ; "it came from the cabin."

"There is no one there but the Captain, Hislop, and the boy Bill, who sleeps in the steerage, and they are all three sound enough by this time," said Lambourne.

"But the sound *was* from the cabin," I persisted, hastening aft.

At that moment another cry, loud and piteous—

a cry that sank into a hoarse moan, echoed through the brig, "piercing the night's dull ear" and ringing high above the welter of the sea alongside, the bubble at the stem and stern, or the hum of the wind through the taut rigging.

We all rushed aft to the companion, and at that instant Antonio sprang up the cabin stair. By the clear splendour of the tropical moonlight, we could see that his usually swarthy visage was pale as death, while his black eyes blazed like two burning coals. He grasped his unsheathed knife, the blade of which, as well as his hands and clothes, were covered with blood !

My heart grew sick with vague apprehension, and my first thought was for a weapon ; but none was near.

"What have you been about, you rascally pica-roon—and why did you leave the wheel ?" shouted Lambourne, becoming greatly excited ; "the masts might have gone by the board—what devil's work have you been after below ?"

Then the dark Spanish creole grinned, as the blood dripped from his hands on the white and moonlit deck.

"Knock him down with a handspike, Carlton," added Lambourne, who could not leave the wheel ; "knock him down—the shark-faced swab !"

On hearing this, Antonio drew from his breast a

revolver pistol, one of a pair which we knew always hung loaded in Weston's cabin, and fired straight at the head of Carlton, who dodged the shot, which killed the seaman, named Will White, who stood behind him.

The ball pierced the brain of the poor fellow, who bounded convulsively, nearly three feet from the deck ; he fell heavily on his face, and never moved again, for he was dead — dead as a stone !

In its suddenness, this terrible deed paralysed us with horror, not unmixed with fear, as we were all unarmed and completely in the power of this Spanish demon, the report of whose pistol brought all the startled crew, tumbling over each other, out of the fore-castle.

“Aha, maldita ! Santos y Angeles !” said the Spaniard, waving the pistol, the muzzle of which yet smoked, towards us in a half circle, as a warning for all to stand back ; “did you think to run your yigs upon me ? I am Antonio el Cubano, and don't value you all a rope's-end or a rotten castano, as you shall find. I am now the captain of this ship, and shall force you all to obey me, or else”— here he swore one of those sonorous and blasphemous oaths which run so glibly from a Spanish tongue— “I will shoot you all in succession, till I am the last man left on board ; and when I am tired of the

ship I can burn or scuttle her. Do you understand all this?"

Dead silence followed this strange address, the half of which was scarcely understood by our men, as it was said in Spanish.

"Basta !" (avast) "I see that you *do* understand," he resumed ; "and now begin by obedience. Throw this carrion—this *bestia muerta*—overboard."

But perceiving how we all shrunk back,

"Overboard with him," he added, brutally kicking the inanimate body of poor Will White ; "or, demonio, I shall send the first who disobeys me to keep him company !"

He grasped me by the arm ; his hateful clutch was firm as a smith's vice ; and then he levelled his pistol at the head of Ned Carlton.

For a moment the latter stood irresolute, and then seeing the black muzzle of the revolver within a foot of his head, he muttered a deep malediction, stamped his foot with rage on the deck, and said,

"Mr. Rodney, bear a hand with me to launch this murdered man—this poor fellow overboard !"

"Obey !" thundered Antonio.

Like one in a dream I bent over the dead man, on whose pale face, glazed eyes, and relaxed jaw, the bright moonlight was shining, and in my excitement and bewilderment I nearly slipped and fell

in the pool of blood which flowed from his death wound.

I had never touched a corpse before, and an irrepressible shudder ran through all my veins. But that emotion once over, I could have handled a dozen, with perhaps indifference ; and there are few who, after touching the dead, have not experienced this change of feeling.

Ned Carlton, with a sound like a sob in his honest breast—a sob of mingled rage and commiseration—raised the yet warm body ; I took the feet, and through one of the quarter-boards, which was open, we launched it into the great deep, and as the brig flew on, rolling before the early morning wind, there remained no trace of poor Will White but his blood, a dark pool upon the deck ; and the crew stood staring at it and at each other with blank irresolution, horror, and dismay expressed in all their faces.

Empty-handed and defenceless as we all were, each was afraid to speak or act, lest he might be the next victim whom the merciless Cubano would shoot down.

With a growl of defiance Antonio now turned away, and brandishing the revolver in token of the obedience he meant to exact, he descended slowly into the cabin, where we soon heard him smashing open the lockers, and busy with the case-bottles in

the steward's locker, or Billy the cabin-boy's pantry.

His departure seemed a relief to all, but in half a minute after he was gone below, little Billy, or "boy Bill," as he was usually termed, whose sleeping place was the steerage, rushed up the cabin stair in his shirt, and ran among us, sobbing with fear and dismay.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONFERENCE OF THE CREW.

SOME time elapsed before the poor boy became sufficiently coherent to be understood, but it would seem that on hearing the first cry, which had alarmed me, he sprang out of his berth, which was at the foot of the companionway, and on looking into the cabin he saw by the night lamp which swung in the skylight the Cubano, armed with a bloody knife, rush from the captain's state-room into that of the mate, which was opposite.

Another choking cry acquainted him that Antonio had stabbed Hislop in his sleep ; and fearing that his own turn would come next, he had crept into an empty cask which lay below the companion-ladder, and remained there, trembling with dread, until he took an opportunity of rushing on deck and joining us.

This terrible revelation added to our dismay.

We were now in a desperate predicament, without

a captain or mate to navigate the brig, and at the mercy of a well-armed desperado, to whom homicide was a pastime ; thus, all who had handled him so severely on the night we crossed the line began to feel no small degree of alarm for their own safety, being certain that more blood would be shed the moment he came on deck.

All dressed themselves with the utmost expedition, and it was resolved to hold a council of war. Lambourne was still at the wheel ; and to be prepared for any emergency, he resolved to reduce the canvas on the brig. So the royals were sent down, all studding-sails taken in, and the topsails were handed : all this was done as quietly as possible, lest any sound might rouse the fiend who seemed now to possess the *Eugenie*.

Lambourne ventured to peep down the skylight, when he saw Antonio drinking brandy from a case-bottle, without troubling himself with a glass. Then the Spaniard proceeded to attire himself in the best clothes of Captain Weston ; he forced open several lockfast places, and took from them money and jewellery, which he concealed about his person. What his ultimate object could be in performing these acts of plunder on the open sea, we could neither conceive nor divine, but on chancing to glance upward, he caught a glimpse of Tom's eyes peering down.

There was an explosion, a crashing of glass, and a ball from a revolver, fired upward, grazed Tom's left ear and pierced the rim of his sou'-wester as a hint that our Cubano had no intention of being overlooked in his operations below.

We heard him close the cabin door with a bang, and after locking it, throw himself on the floor *behind it*, with the intention of sleeping, probably, but with the full resolution that no one should enter without disturbing him ; and in this way, after examining his pistols, he reposed every night afterwards while on board.

"By jingo ! I thought the killing o' them birds would lead to bad luck somehow," said Henry Warren, an old foremast man, with a reproachful glance at me, as he threw the two albatrosses overboard.

We now held a solemn conference to meet the emergency which was certain to come anon, and to consider the best means of subduing and disarming the culprit.

"Whoever goes nigh him in the cabin, either by the door or the skylight, risks being stabbed or shot," said Tattooed Tom ; "so we must go to work some other way, shipmates, and that other way must be considered."

"We might close and batten the skylight and companion, and then starve or smoke him out,"

suggested one of the crew, Francis Probart, our carpenter.

"Smoke him out?" echoed Tom.

"Yes, as we do rats."

"By what?"

"Fill a bucket with spun-yarn and greased flax, with sulphur and bilge-water—ain't that the medical compound for rats——"

"Nonsense," said Tom; "you would burn the ship——"

"As he has often threatened to do," said Carlton, "and may do yet."

A most extraordinary scheme was proposed by one man, that we should launch the longboat, throw into her some bags of bread and gang-casks of water, unship the compass, double-bank the oars, and shove off for the coast of South America, after scuttling the brig and leaving Antonio to his fate.

We were in a horrible state of perplexity, and I seemed to see constantly before me the gashed bodies of my two kind, brave, and hospitable friends—Captain Weston and Marc Hislop—lying in their berths dead and unavenged, with their destroyer beside them!

We had the capstan-bars, and with these it was proposed to assai him when next he came on deck. Then we had the carpenter's tools, among which a hand-saw, an auger, an adze, and a hatchet, made

very available weapons, and these, with the old cutlass and harpoons which figured on the night we crossed the line, were speedily appropriated. I was armed with a heavy claw-hammer, and, vowing firmly to stand by each other, we resolved to lynch Antonio the moment he came out of his den.

While we were thus employed in devising the means of punishment, the dark shadows of night passed away; the morning sun came up in his tropical splendour, and the blue waves of the southern sea rolled around us in light, but not a sail was visible on their vast expanse.

The crew seemed pale and excited, as they might well be, and by buckets of water we cleansed the deck from the blood that stained it.

The morning advanced into noon, and the vessel was steered her due course, for the wind was still fair. Ned Carlton was at the wheel, and the men were all grouped forward, when suddenly Antonio appeared on deck with a knife in his sash and a revolver in each hand.

He was so pale that his olive face seemed almost a pea-green, and a black crust upon his cruel lips showed the extent of his potations in the cabin. He glanced into the binnacle, and perceiving that the brig was still being steered her old course, he cried, in a hoarse voice—

“Hombres, allegarse a la cuesta!” (men, bear

towards the land), and pointing to the direction in which he knew the vast continent of South America—from which we were probably four or five hundred miles distant—must be, he added orders in English to shape the brig's course due west, and stamped his right foot on the deck to give his words additional force.

He took us so suddenly by surprise, that, although we had been waiting and watching for him since dawn, his resolute aspect and the arms he wielded controlled us all, and we stared at each other with irresolution in our purpose and in our faces. No man, apparently, cared to act as leader.

“Presto !” roared the Cubano ; “obey and keep quiet, or, demonio ! as there are so many, I have a great mind to shoot one half, that I may be able to control the rest. Cast loose those topsails, and up with the royals again—set the flying-jib and main trysail—quick, perros, or I'll make shark's meat of some more of you !”

The crew seemed to lack either resolution or the power of combination, and no man appeared anxious to incur the sure penalty of instant death by acting in opposition to his peremptory orders in setting an example to the rest. So, sullenly and silently the sail trimmers stood by the tacks and braces ; the wheel revolved in the unwilling hands of Ned Carlton, who was compelled to obey, for the cold

muzzle of a six-barrelled revolver, capped and cocked, was held close to his left temple.

The head of the *Eugenie* payed off in obedience to her helm, the yards swung round and were braced sharp up ; and with the starboard tacks on board, in three minutes we were steering as due westward as her head would lie for the coast of South America.

This alteration of our course furnished the crew with a new source of speculation. It was evidently the intention of Antonio, if he could reach the coast of Seguro, or that of Bahia, to escape with all his valuables and his vengeance ; and to this end, if ships passed without succouring or overhauling us, and if we did not destroy him, he might certainly destroy us, by scuttling the brig or setting her on fire.

The noon passed over without an "observation," for there was no one to work it, to estimate the latitude or longitude, to keep a reckoning, or take note of our variation and leeway ; and lest we should signal any passing ship, Antonio, who was a most thoughtful scoundrel, threw every colour we had overboard. He did not come on deck again for some time, as he had plenty of spirits and provisions below ; and the tell-tale compass in the skylight afforded him constant information as to whether the brig was steered in the direction he wished.

He was constantly drinking, but never became so intoxicated as to be unwary.

And so the fated brig glided over the hot sea under the blazing sun. The albatrosses came round us again, with tripping feet, flapping wings, and open bills; but no one molested them now—we had other things to think of; and as I sat on the anchor stock in the weather bow, watching them floating in the water, or skimming over it with their vast wings outspread, I thought of the “Ancient Mariner” and all that *he* had suffered for killing “the bird of good omen.”

I felt a strange dread creeping over me while these verses seemed on my tongue—they were so descriptive of the atmosphere and of our situation:—

“ All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody sun at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the moon.

* * * *

“ I closed my lids and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat,
For the sea and sky, and the sea and sky,
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

I CONFRONT THE CUBANO.

FROM the wild thoughts and fancies which the horrors of that early morning, our strange situation, and my own rather active imagination, were suggesting, I was roused by Ned Carlton, who, on being relieved from the wheel, came forward to the bows, where most of the crew were seated on the windlass, or were lounging against the bitts, speculating on what might turn up next.

In an excited and impressive manner, he reported that he had heard, from time to time, the sound of moans, as from some one in great pain, in the cabin ; that he believed that either the captain or mate yet survived ; and if we could get down by any means we might be in time to save one or other. If he was bleeding to death, the victim could not last long—a little time, and we should be too late !

This information increased our anxiety, and greatly excited us.

Remembering the manner in which Antonio first came on board—the mystery of his being alone in that blood-stained boat—his dreams—the disappearance of Roberts—the occurrences of the morning—and though last, not least, the rough treatment to which the crew had subjected him on the night we passed the line,—none were very willing to enter the cabin where this savage Cubano, flushed with brandy, bloodshed, and ferocity, sat with loaded pistols in his hands. But all felt that something *must* be done ; that, while a doubt remained, it should be solved, and a life so important to us saved, even though others be risked for it.

I volunteered to become the envoy of the crew.

“No, no, Master Rodney,” said Tattooed Tom ; “this will never do ! What, do you think we will let you venture into that murderer’s den while so many able-bodied fellows hang astern ?”

“But I know his language, which none of you do.”

“He speaks the Queen’s English now as well as any of us,” said Carlton ; “and if I had only a pistol or a musket to give me but one chance for my life, I would have made *it* speak to him long ago, in the lingo such pirates know best.”

“Moreover, as I did not molest him on the night we crossed the line, he has no particular grudge at *me*,” I urged.

"There is some sense and truth in that," muttered several of the crew.

"I'll go—it is settled," said I, anxious to solve the mystery of the groans, while feeling a glow of triumph at the applause I should gain for the risk I ran, which assuredly was not a small one.

"It is a shame for us lubberly fellows to stand by here, and see that lad risk his life," said Probart, one of the crew ; "and if so be that creole pica-roon falls foul of him—"

"If he does," exclaimed Tom Lambourne through his firmly-set teeth, while striking his clenched right hand on the hard palm of the left, "may I never see England again if we don't attack him both at stem and stern at once ! I'll drop down the skylight, with as many as will follow me, while you, Ned, will dash down the companionway with the rest, and then at him with hatchet, handsaw, and capstan-bar. He can't kill us *all*, shipmates, that's one comfort—he can't kill us all !"

The prospect of an early demise was neither soothed nor encouraged by this promise of the bloody scene that was to follow.

The carpenter gave me a small but very sharp tomahawk. I concealed it in my breast, and resolved to use it to some purpose if molested in the cabin. The idea flashed upon me that by one determined blow I might disable him for ever, and

perhaps do an act of justice by dispatching him outright.

With a vague sense that I was about to face a terrible danger, and that the sooner it was faced and past, the better, I walked hastily aft, and on descending the companion-ladder paused when half-way down, and after knocking on the bulk-head called out distinctly and boldly,

“Antonio! Hallo, Cubano!”

“Well, what do you want?” asked he, sulkily.

“To speak with you; may I come down?”

“Enter, companero; you have not yet harmed me, thus I bear you no malice.”

Putting a hand in my breast to ascertain that my little hatchet was secure, I entered the cabin, where the Cubano, with his broad back placed against the rudder-case, was seated on the stern-locker at the table, which he had covered with bottles, biscuits, cheese, and polonies, while papers, dockets, broken desks and boxes, lay scattered about him. He was clad, as I have stated, in the poor skipper's best shore-going suit of clothes, which he wore open and loose, for the atmosphere of the cabin, notwithstanding the shattered skylight, was oppressively hot, as the sun was now almost vertical; the flies were in noisy swarms, and the cockroaches were crawling over all the beams and bulkhead panels.

On first hearing a foot on the companion-ladder, he had evidently snatched up a revolver and cocked it ; but on finding that his visitor was only me, he put it down, threw away the fag-end of a cigarito, and said, with a ferocious grin and ironical politeness,

“Buenos dias (a good day), senor ; to what am I indebted for this visit ?”

It was the first time I had ever looked in the face of a man who had coolly destroyed a fellow-being as he had done, and my flesh seemed to creep with an indescribable loathing ; but I had a purpose to achieve, and determined to do it.

I was about to enter Weston’s state-room, when the Cubano cocked his revolver and cried, in a voice of thunder,

“Con. back, or I will shoot you as dead as he is ! Ha, ha ! *por grados*” (by degrees) “I shall get rid of you all.”

I paused and looked at him ; my young heart beat wildly ; I felt that I was facing death, and what would I not have given had my hatchet been a pistol, even with *one* barrel, though my opponent was master of twelve charges.

“He is dead then ?” said I, in a husky voice.

“Who—which ?” asked the Cubano, with a fresh cigarito between his strong white teeth.

“Captain Weston.”

"Aye, dead as Judas !" said he, laughing hoarsely.

"But I understand that Hislop—" I stammered.

"El contra-maestre—well ?"

At that moment a low moan, which went through my heart, came from the state-room or little side cabin of Marc Hislop.

"Well, hombre, what of him ?" growled Antonio.

"He is bleeding to death, and I wish to remove him."

"Do as you please, he will be food for the fish before the sun sets."

"You will allow me to take him on deck ?" said I, earnestly, almost imploringly.

"Yes ; you have done me no harm ;" (he repeated this very often) "woe to those who have done so !"

"But, Cubano, I cannot do it alone."

A gleam of suspicion flashed in the eyes of Antonio as he said—

"True ; but not a man shall enter here, and leave alive. The ship-boys may assist you ; but I will shoot the whole crew down like dogs, if they venture to approach me ; so I give you five minutes to carry the contra-maestra to the forecastle bunks, or to pitch him overboard, whichever you please, though the last would please *me*."

"Five minutes ?"

"Yes, five by this watch," he added, pulling out of his fob a gold repeater, which, even in the excitement of the moment, I recognised to be *nine*, the same which my mother gave me, when I first left home for Eton, and of which I had been robbed at Teneriffe. There was no doubting the little rings and charms which my sisters Dot, Sybil, and one of their female friends had appended to it ; and thus I discovered another black link in the life of Antonio.

I dared not appear to recognise it when his strong, brown, hairy hand, the bloody spots on which made me shudder, held it towards me, lest he might shoot me down, but summoned Billy Wilkins, the cabin boy, by desiring the man at the wheel "to pass word forward for him and another apprentice."

The boys came, but not without great fear and reluctance ; and while Antonio proceeded leisurely to make another paper cigar, keeping his ears open for every sound, and his black eyes fixed keenly on us the while, we entered the little state-room of Marc Hislop, and beheld a sight which filled us with the deepest commiseration and dismay.

CHAPTER XXV.

I RESCUE THE MATE.

PALE as marble, with his lower jaw relaxed and his eyes almost closed, motionless as if dead, but, nevertheless, still breathing slowly and heavily, poor Marc Hislop lay in his bed, the clothes and pillows of which were saturated with blood ; for he seemed to be covered by wounds, and the crimson current had flowed over the piles of his favourite books, which were scattered upon the cabin floor, where they had been trod under foot by Antonio while overhauling the repositories of the unfortunate proprietor.

Shuddering, and in haste, we lifted him from the bed, muffled him in a blanket and conveyed him, passive as a child, in our hands, from the cabin.

As we passed out, for a moment it seemed as if the ruffianly Spaniard repented of his temporary clemency ; for when he saw the pale, bloody, and insensible form of the poor fellow trailed past, he made an ominous stride towards us, and threaten-

eningly clutched the haft of the Albacete knife in his sash. Then waving his hand, almost contemptuously, he said,

“Basta—go, go—it matters little now, either to him or to me. Demonio ! I always strike deep.”

Alarm and pity endowed us with unusual strength, and we bore the speechless victim of Antonio up the steep stair to the deck, where our crew, with muttered oaths of vengeance, and expressions of commiseration, bore him into the fore part of the vessel. There a bed was made up for him on deck ; for coolness, an awning was rigged over it, and we had his wounds examined.

We found a deep stab in the neck, most dangerously near the jugular vein ; a second in the breast, a third between the bones of the right forearm, and a fourth in the left thigh ; all had evidently been dealt through the bedclothes, and with a savage energy of purpose.

“The poor lad is dying for lack of a doctor,” said old Tom, who knelt beside Hislop, handling his wounds with the tenderness of a woman ; “and if the whole British navy hove in sight, we haven’t a rag of bunting to shake out as a signal, since that rascally picaroon, the Cubano, has cast every colour and signal overboard.

“Well, Tom, he shan’t die this bout,” said Ned Carlton, hopefully ; “let us tie up his wounds as

best we can, to belay the bleeding, and give him something as a reviver."

"It's a blessing his old mother in Scotland don't see all this," added rough Tom Lambourne, with a tear in his eye ; "poor Marc Hislop is her only support, and a sister's too."

I thought now with compunction, how often his theories and pedantry had bored me, and I resolved to be unremitting in my care of him.

The united medical skill of those honest souls, our crew, was very small ; however, the wounds were carefully washed in clean water ; their best shirts were torn into bandages, or folded into pads to stop the bleeding ; and in this they were quite successful.

A breaker of New England rum was hoisted out of the forehold, and its head was instantly started. The liquor was very redolent of treacle ; but a glass of it mixed with water—the readiest stimulant that occurred to the minds of the seamen—was poured between the parched lips of the sufferer, who at last slept, in the pleasant atmosphere formed by the awning which shaded him from the fierce sun, and in the breeze that whistled past the bows as the *Eugenie* still bore on her new course, close hauled with all her fore and-aft canvas set, and the white glittering spray flying over her cat-heads and dolphin striker.

The terrible Cubano still kept possession of the cabin. His two six-barrelled revolvers gave him twelve shots, and we were but *nine* in all, as the Captain, Roberts, and Will White had already perished by his hand, and Hislop to all appearance was dying ; thus Antonio kept us all in subjection by his weapons, just as half a dozen well-armed soldiers may control a mob of thousands.

So passed the night ; the crew grouped forward full of schemes for vengeance, and he aft full of triumph, ferocity, and cognac.

Next morning, I was on the quarter-deck, and when day broke, I became aware, by a plashing sound astern, that we were towing something in the dead water of the brig's wake. On looking over the taffrail, what were my emotions on beholding the body of my kind friend Weston—our good and hospitable captain—towed by the neck at the end of a line !

Around the poor corpse, which was in its night-dress, the green waves danced merrily in the golden light of the morning sun that was now beaming over the sea, "refreshing the distant shores and reviving all but him." Antonio in the night had cast it from one of the cabin windows on the port side of the rudder-case, and through that aperture the line to which it was attached was now run.

By the smoke of a cigar which ascended to the

taffrail at times, I discovered that the atrocious Cubano was sitting at the open cabin window below me, watching and waiting to see the body devoured by sharks ; and I knew that he would shoot all who attempted to cross his purpose, or who came within reach of his pistol. This prevented any man from lowering himself over the stern, either to haul in the line or cut it adrift.

“Demonio !” we heard him exclaim, when, by a sudden lurch of the ship, the line parted, and the poor corpse went rolling and surging to leeward.

“There he goes, and God bless him, although he’s cut adrift without a prayer or a sailor’s winding-sheet,” said Tom Lambourne, taking off his hat, as the body bobbed like a fisherman’s float on the waves for a little space, and then disappeared in the long white track made by the *Eugenie*, through the dark apple-green of the morning sea.

All the stories I had heard or read of Spanish revenge seemed eclipsed by the atrocities of this fiendish Cubano.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE REQUITAL.

THREE days and nights passed after this without finding us able to surprise or dislodge the demon who was in possession of the cabin ; without our knowing where the ship was driving or drifting to, and without a sail appearing. A man-of-war belonging to any country we should have hailed as a protector ; but on the wide waters of the Southern Atlantic ships are few and far between.

Hislop rallied a little, and was removed into one of the fore-castle berths. He could tell us only that he had been surprised when asleep, and been stabbed again and again—that he became insensible, and remembered nothing more. His distress was great when we related the story of the Captain's fate, the death of Will White, and that their destroyer was still in possession of the ship, and the arbiter of all our lives.

He writhed on his bed of pain, and sighed bitterly

on finding how stiff and sore, how weak and almost blind he had become by loss of blood : but a crisis was now at hand with our Cubano.

The evening of the fourth day after we had saved Hislop found the brig still lying a westerly course ; but whether in the latitude of Cape San Roque or of the Rio Grande, we knew not ; and, I suppose, it was all the same to Antonio.

I was at the wheel. The sunset was gorgeously beautiful. The *Eugenie* was running with both tacks aft ; and under the arched lee of her courses I could see the blood-red disc of the sun right ahead setting in the waves, which shone in all the colours of the dying dolphin ; while against the flaming orb, the black outline of the masts, the figure-head and the taper end of the jibboom, with its cap, guys, and gear, were clearly and distinctly defined.

The waves ahead rose and fell between me and the sun, as slowly and imperceptibly he sank at the flaming horizon, from a quarter circle to a segment ; then the last vestige of that also disappeared, but the lingering rays of his glory played upward on the light clouds that floated above. Even they paled away and died out, and twilight stole over the silent sea, which changed from gold to a transparent blue.

With the increasing twilight came a change of wind, and before it a great bank of cloud rolled from

the horizon on our starboard bow. Under its shadow the sea was darkened, and its broken water flecked with white. The new breeze came first upon our quarter, then rapidly it was abeam, and three great albatrosses were seen to whip the sea with their wings, while a whole shoal of brown porpoises surged past our bows, plunging joyously from wave to wave.

Tacks and braces were instantly manned, and the sails were trimmed anew for our desultory course.

"Sail ho—to windward!" said one of the crew, in a low but excited voice, lest the sound might reach the cabin; and as the dense bank of purple cloud opened, a large bark came out of it, and her form became more and more defined as she left the vapour astern. She was going free—that is, with her head further off the wind than close-hauled—and had a press of snow-white canvas, which shone in the last light of the west.

"She is four miles off," said Carlton

"We must signal her," added Lambourne.

"With what?" asked Carlton, in the same sharp but low voice; "every colour is overboard."

"Anything will do—a blue shirt at the foremast head; quick!—the sky will be quite dark in ten minutes. Run it up in a ball with a slipping loop, man-'o-war fashion," said Lambourne, in a loud whisper; "get ready a ship's lantern some of you,

for the night darkens so fast that we shall scarcely be visible when she is abeam of us. Ned, get into the fore-channel, and wave the light as a signal that we want a boat."

These orders were rapidly obeyed, and preparations made to throw the brig in the wind. While one man hastily got the lantern from a little round-house, in which certain stores and tools were kept on deck, Ned Carlton pulled off his shirt, and was in the act of binding it to the signal halyards, when the Spaniard, whose quick ears detected some commotion, sprang on deck, armed as usual.

On seeing Carlton busy with the halyards, he looked round, caught sight of the ship, which was running with the white foam boiling under her fore-foot, and thus in a moment divined what we were about.

Muttering a terrible imprecation in Spanish, he fired at Carlton, but missed him as before, and shot dead a poor apprentice who was close by.

"Tarnal thunder, flesh and blood can't bear this !" shouted Tom Lambourne, whose fury was boundless, and who snatched up a capstan-bar. " Bear down on him all hands : there is neither sea law nor land law can help us here !"

Snatching whatever came nearest to hand, we all rushed upon the Cubano, who stood boldly at bay, and keeping the binuacle *between* us and him,

fired over it five or six shots from his revolver with terrible rapidity ; but so unsteady had his hand become in consequence of his free potations below, that every bullet missed, though one cut the knuckles of Tom Lambourne's right hand, and another tore away the rim of my straw-hat.

He drew a second revolver from his sash, but Lambourne, by one lucky blow with the capstan-bar, knocked it out of his hand. It went twenty feet into the air, and fell overboard.

Quick as lightning, Antonio placed the other in his breast, drew his knife, stooped his head, and darting through us like an eel, gave Carlton a gash in the thigh as he passed.

He then made for the main-rigging, and sprang on the bulwark, no doubt with the intention of running up aloft to some secure perch, where he might re-load his remaining pistol, and shoot us all down at leisure ; but he missed his hold of the rattlins, and fell overboard !

There was a shout of furious joy.

"The sea will rob the gallows of its due !" said Carlton ; "but he'll be shark's meat, any way."

But Antonio was not gone yet, for in falling he caught one of the lower studding-sail booms, and clutched it with deadly tenacity, for he knew that if once he was fairly launched into the ocean his fate would be sealed.

His face was pale with combined fear and fury ; his black eyes blazed with the fire of hatred ; the perspiration oozed in drops upon his temples. Tom Lambourne sprang forward to beat off his fingers ; but at that moment, the boom, a slender spar, broke from its lashings alongside, and swung out at a *right angle* from the brig, with the wretch at the extreme end of it, dangling over the waves, like a herring at the point of a ramrod.

Again and again he writhed his body upward in wild struggles to get astride the boom, or to reach it with his knees, but in vain !

Instead of exciting pity, his terrible situation drew forth a shout of derision, mingled with expressions of hatred and satisfaction, from the line of avenging faces that surveyed him over the bulwark. He hung thus for fully five minutes, for he was a powerful man, of great strength, muscle, and bulk.

I have no doubt this man was as brave as it is possible for a ruffian to be ; but the prospect of an immediate death—a death, too, from which there was no escape—terrified him.

His glance of hate towards us turned to one of wild and earnest entreaty.

“ Mercy !—pardon !—in the name and for the love of the Almighty !” he exclaimed in Spanish, in a tone of intense earnestness ; but he was heard by us

with fierce derision in that moment of just triumph and too long delayed vengeance.

Twice the *Eugenie* gave a lee lurch, and each time the feet and knees of the wretched Cubano were immersed in the waves.

Beneath him was the abyss of water that rushed past the side of the brig. He panted rather than breathed ; and through the dusk we could see how his aching hands turned white as his face ; and that the points of his fingers were blood-red. His eyes grew wild and haggard as terror chilled his coward heart and agonized his soul ; and yet through the surge the fleet craft flew on !

Every moment increased the weight of his body and the weakness of his hands and wrists.

At last it was evident that his powers of endurance could be no longer taxed ; he uttered a half-smothered shriek, and closed his eyes as he clung to that slender spar, and it swayed to and fro while the close-hauled brig flew on !

There was a crash !

The iron hook in the bulwark on which the studding-sail boom was hung, gave way under the double weight of the spar and of his body. There was a shrill cry of despair, like the parting shriek of an evil spirit, on the skirt of the gusty blast, as the boom, and the wretch who clung to it in blind desperation, vanished into the black trough of the

sea, and, like a cork or a reed, were swept amid the salt foam to leeward.

The *Eugenie* rose like a duck upon the water, and, as if freed at that moment from a load of crime, seemed to fly forward with increased speed.

'Twas night now, and the ship which we had first seen upon our weather bow, was a mile astern and to leeward of us.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE THUNDERBOLT.

AN emotion of mingled freedom and satisfaction possessed the whole crew on being rid of our tormentor, and Lambourne now took charge of the brig, which he was perfectly able to handle and work, though ignorant of navigation as a science, and having but a vague idea of the course to steer for the Cape of Good Hope.

She was hove in the wind, while in the moonlight, about two hours after the exciting scene which closes the last chapter, we committed to the deep the body of Antonio's last victim, the poor apprentice, whom the sailmaker sewed up in his hammock, to which, being without shot or other suitable weights, we tied a sack of coals to sink the corpse.

The head-yards were filled again, and as if anxious to leave that portion of the sea as far as possible astern, we hauled up for the Cape. Tom Lambourne ordered every stitch of canvas that the spars would

hold, to be spread upon the *Eugenie*, that she might, as he said, "walk through the water in her own style."

All he could do, at first, was to keep her in the course we had been steering on the night these disasters began, for as yet we knew not to what degree of latitude, south or north, we might have been drifting; however, we calculated that Hislop, weak as he was, might be able to take a solar observation, and prick off our place on the chart, in the course of six or seven days.

We had the usually snug little cabin cleansed and cleared from the *débris* created by the outrageous proceedings of Antonio, who must have gone to the bottom with all Weston's valuables and money about him, as we could find neither; and the sweet expression of the poor widow's face, as it seemed to smile on us from the miniature on the after-bulkhead, contrasted strangely with all the wild work that had so lately taken place on board.

Hislop and I were restored to our former berths, and then more than once in my dreams the pale olive-green visage and glaring eyes of the Cubano came before me, and again I seemed to see him clinging unpitied, and in desperation, to the slender boom which swung above the seething sea—for his death and all its concomitant horrors haunted me and made me unhappy.

The intensity of the heat in that season suggested the idea that we could not have drifted far south of the line.

So great was it, that the upper spars of the *Eugenie* appeared to wriggle or vibrate like serpents aloft in the sunshine ; while so hot, so clear, and so rarefied was the atmosphere between decks, that it was suffocating, especially in the lullings of the faint breeze. A white heat seemed to make sea and sky grow pale, and the former cast upward a reflection from its glassy surface and long smooth swells, that was hot—hot beyond all description.

Though ever and anon the upper deck was drenched with salt water, it dried immediately, emitting a strong odour of wet wood, while the skids over the side failed to keep the paint, tar, and rosin from rising in large burnt blisters.

About the time when we hoped that Hislop would have been well enough to make an observation, even by being placed in a chair on deck, the weather became so rough that he was unable to leave his berth, and during all that day the brig drove before a heavy gale, with her courses hauled close up, the fore and main-topsail yards lowered on the caps, and their canvas close reefed.

After the heat we had endured, the reader may imagine this gale would be refreshing and a relief. Not so. The atmosphere as it became dark with

gathering clouds, increased in density, closeness and heat ; thus about the time we should have had clear twilight, the hour was gloomy as a northern midnight—so dark that the men in the tops, or those 'lying out along the foot-ropes at the yard-arms, when under close-reefed topsails, could not be seen from the deck, while the breeze that swept over the ocean was breathless—hot as the simoom of the desert ; and our men knew not whether they were most drenched by perspiration or the spoundrift torn from the warm wave tops by the increasing blast.

The peculiar appearance of this black gale alarmed and bewildered Tattooed Tom, who could make nothing of it, while poor Marc Hislop, whose skill would have been invaluable to us, when he heard the singing out on deck, the thunder of the bellying courses struggling with their brails, the roar of the wind through the half-bared masts and rigging, the clatter of blocks and feet overhead, writhed in his bed, and mourned his own inactivity, or rather incapacity ; but he sent me to tell Lambourne to cover up the anchors with wetted canvas, as it was not improbable, by the state of the atmosphere, that it was full of electricity, and thus we might be in a dangerous way.

“Tell Tom,” he whispered, “it is a trade-wind gale—I know it to be so.”

"How?" I asked, "when you are lying here below?"

"By the barometer, which remains high, while the wind is steady," replied Hislop, in a low voice, for he was still very weak; "if the barometer *fall*, be sure it will become a typhoon, and then, with a short-handed craft, heaven help us! But assure Tom it is only as yet a trade-wind gale—to take as much canvas off her as he can, and to make all snug aloft. We'll have thunder directly, Dick—such thunder as you can only hear in the tropics."

He sank back, exhausted even by these few words, while I hurried on deck with his orders.

I had scarcely conveyed them to Lambourne, who was keeping a look-out forward, when, amid the dusky obscurity of sea and sky, there burst a sudden gleam of wondrous light.

The men, who were spreading some old wetted sails over the sheet and working anchors; the steersman at the wheel; the watch, and all hands who were crouching to leeward, or holding on by ropes and belaying-pins to windward, seemed for a moment to become white-visaged spectres, amid a sea of pale blue flame—a sea whereon the flying brig with her brailed courses and reefed topsails, her half naked masts and black cordage, were all distinctly visible as at noon day, while the polished

brass on funnel, binnacle, and skylight, all flashed and shone, as ship and crew, with all their details of form and feature,

“ Were instant seen and instant lost.”

For a broad and blinding sheet of electric flame burst upon the darkness of the night, and passed away as rapidly, when the livid brand burst in the welkin or in the wave, we knew not which.

Then came the roar of thunder—the stunning and appalling thunder of the tropics, every explosion of which seemed to rend earth, sea, and sky, as they rolled like a palpable thing, or like the united salvo of a thousand cannon overhead, to die away in rumbling echoes at the far horizon.

After a sound so mighty and bewildering, the bellowing of the wind through the rigging, the hiss and roar of the sea as wave broke against wave, the flapping of the brailed courses, the creaking and straining of the timbers, seemed as nothing—the very silence of death—while the *Eugenie* tore on, through mist and spray, through darkness and obscurity, with the foam flying white as winter drift over her bows and martingale.

Again there was a pale green gleam overhead, right above the truck of the mainmast, where the chambers of the sky seemed to open. The clouds divided in the darkness of heaven, and out of that

opening came the forked lightning, zig-zag, green and ghastly.

There was a dreadful shock, which knocked every man down, except Carlton, who was at the wheel, and an exclamation of terror escaped us all.

A thunderbolt had struck the *Eugenie* !

With all its wondrous speed—instantaneous as electric light could be—it glided down the main-top-gallant-mast, rending the topmast-cap and the framed grating of the top to pieces; thence it ran down the mainmast, burst through the deck, and spent its fury in the hold.

At that moment the main-topmast, with all its yards, gear, and canvas, fell about the deck in burning brands, and the brig was hove right in the wind's eye, while the sea twitched the helm out of the hands of Ned Carlton, who became bewildered on finding the compasses lose all their polarity, by the influence of the electric fluid, the north point of one heading south-east, and of the other south-west.

Almost immediately after this there was a cry of "Fire !"—that cry so terrible, so appalling on board ship; and then thick white smoke was seen to issue from the crevices of the battened main-hatchway.

All hands rushed to this point. The long-boat was unshipped from its chocks and dragged aft; some stood by with buckets of water, while others

struck off the padlocks and iron bars ; the tarpaulin was torn away—the hatch lifted—and lo !

A column of fire ascended in a straight line from the body of the hold, lurid, red, and scorching, as the casks of molasses and bales of cotton burned and blazed together. A column that rose up between the masts, scorched through the mainstay, all the braces of the fore yards, and filled the whole vessel with light, announced that all was over !

“It is a doomed ship !” cried Tom Lambourne ; “we must leave her at last. Clear away the long-boat. Be cool, lads ; be cool and steady ! Your lives depend upon your conduct now, and your obedience to orders !”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CAST AWAY.

NOT a moment was lost in getting the long-boat over the side, and with a heavy splash, by which it was nearly swamped, we got it afloat.

Ned Carlton and Probart the carpenter sprang in, to fend off and keep it from being stove or dashed to pieces by the sea, against the brig's side.

By the wild weird glare that rose in frightful columns from the main and fore hatchways, we had plenty of light, as it shone far over the huge billows of that dark and tempestuous sea, to which we were about to commit our fortunes ; and now a pale and half-dressed figure approached us.

It was Marc Hislop, whom the terrible odour had roused from his berth in the cabin ; and he now came forward, supporting his feeble steps by clutching the shrouds and belaying-pins.

I rushed below and brought up a blanket and great coat to wrap him in, and he was promptly

swung over into the boat, where Carlton received and supported him.

Three bags of bread, with a tarpaulin to cover them, two kegs of rum, four casks of water, with oars, sails, and blankets, were thrown pell-mell into the boat. A hatchet and a bundle of spunyarn completed our stores.

The compasses were considered now to be useless, or were omitted, I forget which.

The wind still amounted to a gale, though less violent, and it fanned the growing flames, so that the fated brig burned fast. The lightning still flashed, but at the horizon, and the thunder was heard to grumble above the hiss of the sea ; yet we heeded them not, though they added to the terror and the grandeur of the scene ; and, most providentially for us, the fury of the storm was past.

Tattooed Tom was the last man who left the brig, and the moment he was in the boat, he exclaimed, with a loud voice, that rang above the roaring of the flames, which now gushed through every hatchway and aperture, above the howling of the wind and the breaking of the frothy sea—

“Shove off!—out oars, there, to starboard—pull round her stern—pull with a will to windward—keep the boat’s bow to the break of the sea !”

We pulled silently and vigorously, and soon got

clear of the brig, through the four stern windows of which four lines of light glared redly on the ocean.

All our strength was required to achieve this, for the brig, being the larger body, attracted the boat towards her. However, we got safely to windward, which was absolutely necessary, for to leeward there fell hissing into the sea a torrent of sparks and burning brands from the rigging, which was all in flames now.

Resting upon our oars, or only using them to keep the boat's head to the break of the sea, and to prevent her being swamped—an operation during which they were as often flourished in the air as in the ocean, when we rose on the crest of one vast heaving wave, or sank into the dark vale of water between two—resting thus, we gazed in silence and with aching hearts at the destruction of our home upon the sea.

We could *feel* the heat of the conflagration even to windward. In a quarter of an hour she was enveloped from stem to stern in a sheet of fire, that rose skyward in the form of a pyramid. By this time every vestige of her spars, sails, and rigging had disappeared.

The entire deck had been consumed; the bulwarks and moulded plank-sheer rapidly followed, and through the flames that roared fiercely from the

hollow of her hull, we could see the black timber-heads standing upward like a row of fangs.

Rents appeared next in her sides, as the flames burst through the inner and outer sheathing, and with a hissing sound as they met the waves of the briny sea. Then a salt steam rose, and its strange odour, with that of the burning wood, was wafted at times towards us.

At last she gave a sudden heel to starboard, and with a sound unlike anything I ever heard before—a deluge of water extinguishing a mighty fire—the waves rushed tumultuously in on all sides. She vanished from our sight in mist and obscurity, and a heavy darkness suddenly replaced the glare that for a time had lit up the heaving sea, dazzling our eyes and sickening our hearts.

“All’s over now,” said Tom Lambourne, as he grasped the tiller with a firm hand, after carefully wrapping a blanket round poor Hislop, who drooped beside him in the stern-sheets.

“Which way shall we pull?” asked the bowman, as we paused with our oars in the rowlocks.

“It matters little, mates,” cried Tom, in a loud voice, with his left hand at the side of his mouth, to send what he said forward above the roar of the wind and sea. “We must be many hundred miles from Brazil, the nearest land, and we can do nothing now but keep our boat alive by baling and steering

till daybreak. Now, Master Hislop," he added, lowering his voice, "how do you feel, sir?"

"I feel that I am quite in your way, my lads—a useless hand aboard, to consume your food and water," replied Hislop, faintly.

"Why, sir," said Probart, the stroke-oarsman, "you don't think we could have left you to burn in the poor old brig?"

"No, not exactly ; still, I am of no use to you, and I feel——"

"What, sir, what?" asked Tom, anxiously.

"Heart sick and despairing," moaned Hislop, letting his chin drop on his breast.

"Don't talk so, sir," said Lambourne, stoutly ; "despair never found a place in the heart of a British sailor!"

"You are right, Tom ; and perhaps I'll gather headway, and get to windward yet."

"Of course you will," replied Tom, cheerfully ; "but here's a sea coming—together, lads—pull together!"

Despair might well have found a place in all our breasts at that awful crisis ; but Tom's bluff and cheerful way prevented our hearts from sinking, though the hours of that awful night seemed dark and long.

Well, without compass, chart, or quadrant, there we were, ten in number, in an open boat, tossing

upon a dark and stormy sea, enveloped in clouds, with the red lightning gleaming through their ragged openings, or at the far and flat horizon—ignorant of where we were, where to steer for, or what to do, and full of terrible anticipations for the *future* !

We were silent and sleepless.

My heart was full of horror, grief, and vague alarm, when I thought of my home—the quiet, the happy, and peaceful old Rectory, with all who loved me there, and whom I might never see again.

The hot tears that started to my eyes mingled with the cold spray that drenched my cheeks, and there seemed but one consolation for me, that my father, my affectionate and gentle mother and sisters, dear Dot and little Sybil, could never know all I had endured, or how I perished by hunger or drowning, if such were to be my fate.

All the stories I had heard or read of shipwrecked men—their sufferings, their endurance of gnawing hunger and burning thirst, their cannibalism, their mortal struggles with their dearest friends for the *last* morsel of food, for the *last* drop of water, and how the weak perished that the strong might live—crowded upon my memory to augment the real terrors of our situation.

So suddenly had this final catastrophe come upon us that we had considerable difficulty in assuring ourselves of its reality, and that it was not a dream

—a dream, alas ! from which there might be no awaking.

So hour after hour passed darkly, slowly, and silently on.

The turbulence of the wind and waves abated, the lightning passed away, the scud ceased to whirl, the vapours were divided in heaven, and a faint light that stole tremulously upward from the horizon served to indicate the east and the dawn of the coming day.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DISCOVER LAND.

THE following are the names of those who escaped with me in the longboat :—

Mark Hislop, mate,	Edward Carlton,
Thomas Lambourne, second mate,	Henry Warren,
	Hugh Chute,
Francis Probart, carpenter,	Matthew Hipkin,
	William Wilkins, usually called “ Boy Bill.”
John Thomas Burnett, ship’s cook,	

As the morning light came in, there appeared to the south-westward a vast bank of mist or cloud which shrouded half the sky, and assumed a variety of beautiful tints when the rising sun shone on it—yellow and saffron, deepening into purple and blue as its masses changed in the contrary currents of air ; while to the eastward, in the quarter of the sun’s ascension, the rippling ocean shone as if

covered with tremulous and glittering plates of mingled gold and green.

A ration of rum-and-water in equal proportions was now served round to each man—the leathern cover of a bung being our only cup, as we had omitted a drinking vessel among our hastily-collected stores. Half of a biscuit given to each constituted our breakfast, and with hope dawning with the day in our hearts, we shipped our oars, and pulled stoutly towards the west.

Tom Lambourne steered : the sea was smooth, the wind light, and in our favour ; so ere long the mast was shipped, and a sail hoisted to lessen the labour of the rowers.

We were anxious for the dense bank of purple cloud to clear away, that we might have a more extensive view of the horizon, and perhaps discover a sail, but the envious vapour seemed to darken and to roll before us, or rather before the wind that bore us after it

About mid-day, when we were pausing on our oars, breathless and panting with heat, drenched with perspiration, which ran into our eyes and trickled down our breasts ; and when visions of iced water and bitter-beer came tantalizingly to memory—for sea and sky were equally hot, as the former seemed to welter and become oily under the blaze of the latter—a sharp-winged bird that skimmed

past us suddenly caught the hollow eye of Hislop, who, I thought, was sleeping.

"Do you see that bird, Tom," he exclaimed, half starting up from the stern-sheets; "it is a man-of-war bird!"

"What then, sir?"

"We must be near land," replied the mate.

"Land!" reiterated every one in the boat, their voices expressing joy, surprise, or incredulity.

"Is it Brazil?" asked Tattooed Tom, with amazement in his singular face.

"I do not think so," said Hislop, passing a hand wearily and reflectively over his pale forehead. "Brazil—it is impossible, by the last reckoning I made before that Spaniard wounded me. But heaven only knows where we may have drifted to since then!"

"The wind and currents may have taken us many hundred miles from where the last observation was made," added Carlton.

"But I am convinced that we are near land—look at the sea-wrack that passes us now; and we must be out of the track of the Gulf-weed," continued the mate with confidence.

"And may I never see the Nore again if *that ain't land now*, looming right a-head through the fog-bank!" exclaimed Tom, starting up, and shading

his eyes from the sun with both hands as he peered intently westward.

As the reader may imagine, we all gazed anxiously enough in the direction indicated by the old seaman, and a swell of rapture rose in the breasts of all when something in the form of a headland or bluff could be distinctly seen right ahead, bearing due west, about seven miles distant, standing out from the bank of vapour, or looming like a darker shadow *within* it.

This appearance never changed in outline, but remained stationary, and every moment became more defined and confirmed.

Exclamations of joy now broke from us, and we congratulated each other on making the land so soon and so unexpectedly, without enduring the miseries which so frequently fall to the lot of those who are cast away, as we were, in an open boat at sea.

“But what land is it?” was the general inquiry.

Another allowance of grog was served round; the oars were again shipped, we bent our backs and breasts sturdily to the task, and at every stroke almost lifted the boat clean out of the shining water in our eagerness to reach this suddenly discovered shore.

This had such an effect upon Marc Hislop, that though weak and sinking as he had been, he begged that he might be allowed to steer the boat a little

way, while Tom Lambourne kept a bright look-out ahead, to watch for any ripple or surf that might indicate the locality of a treacherous coral reef, as such might prove dangerous to a large and heavily laden craft like ours.

With every stroke of the bending oars the land seemed to rise higher and more high.

Ere long we could make out its form clearly. It was bold, rocky, and mountainous, and as the mist dispersed or rose upward into mid air, we could see the dark brown of the bluff, and some trees of strange aspect, with drooping foliage, on its summit, were clearly defined, as they stood between us and the blue sky beyond.

We soon made out distinctly that it was a large island. The shore was somewhat level to the north-east, and in the centre towered an almost perpendicular mountain of vast height, the sides of which seemed covered with furze, gorse, and brushwood.

Elsewhere its dusky and copper-coloured rocks started sheer out of the sea, whose waters formed a zone of snow-white surf around their base.

We headed the boat to the north-east, where the shore seemed more approachable, and as we pulled along it, but keeping fully three miles off, when the land opened, we saw high crags, deep ravines, shady woods and dells in the interior, though no appearance of houses, of wigwams, or of inhabitants.

Many speculations were now ventured as to what island this might be.

"May it not be land that has never before been discovered?" I suggested with a glow of pleasure, in the anticipation of being among the first to tread an unexplored and hitherto unknown shore. Hislop smiled and shook his head.

Henry Warren, who had been an old South-sea whaler, suggested that it was the island Grando, but Hislop assured us that this was impossible. In the first place, by the position of the sun, he could see that we were not so far south as the parallel of Port San Giorgio, on the Brazilian shore; and in the second, the existence of such an island was doubted.

"Can it be Trinidad Island—Tristan da Cunha, or the Rocks of Martin Vaz?" asked Tom Lambourne.

"If the latter," replied Hislop, "we should now be in south latitude $20^{\circ} 27'$, but this land in no way answers to the aspect of the Martin Vaz Rocks."

"Did you ever see them, sir?" asked several.

"No; but they are described by La Perouse as appearing like *five* distinct headlands." After pausing and pondering for a moment, he suddenly added, with confidence, "It is the Island of Alphonso de Albuquerque!"

"How do you know?" I inquired.

"By the appearance of that cliff, and the mountain inland."

"You have been here before?" asked Probart.

"Never; but I know it to be Alphonso by that cliff on the north, and the mountain, too, which were particularly described in a Spanish book I lost in the *Eugenie*. The mountain is a peak which the author says resembles—did any of you ever see a place like it before?"

"It is as like Tenny Reef, from the Port of Santa Cruz, as one egg is like another!" exclaimed Tom Lambourne.

"Exactly, Tom, that is what the Spanish author likens it to, though he does not use the simile. So if it is the island of Alphonso, we are now somewhere in south latitude $37^{\circ} 6'$, and west longitude $12^{\circ} 2'$. Pull southward, my lads, the shore opens a bit beyond that headland. We shall find a smooth beach probably within the bight yonder."

"Anyway we're not in pilot's water," added Tom, laughing; "give way, mates—stretch out."

We pulled with hearty will, and ere long were close in shore—so close that our larboard oars seemed almost to touch the rocks which rose sheer from the sea, like mighty cyclopean walls, but covered with the greenest moss; they overhung and overshadowed the dark, deep water that washed their base, and as they shielded us from the fierce

noonday heat of the sun, we found the partial coolness refreshing and delightful.

As Hislop had foreseen, on rounding the bluff, the shore receded inward, and through a line of white surf, like that which boils over the bar at a river's mouth, we dashed into a beautiful little bay, the sandy beach of which was shaded by groves of bright green trees.

Still we saw no trace of inhabitants ; but selecting a small creek which was almost concealed by trees that grew, like mangroves, close to the edge of the water, we ran our boat in, moored her securely, where none were likely to find her save ourselves, and then all sprang joyously ashore—at least all save Hislop and Billy the cabin boy, who remained to attend him, while we went on an exploring expedition in search of natives or whatever might turn up next.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE ISLAND OF ALPHONSO.

WE had some dread of savages, and being totally unarmed, we penetrated inland with more anxiety than pleasure at first ; but ere long we became convinced that the island was totally destitute of human inhabitants.

No vestige of wigwam or hut, of road or path, nor even of the smallest track or trail (save such as the wild goats made) was visible anywhere, and thus we became impressed with new emotions of wonder and awe, in treading a soil where man lived not—where no human foot seemed to have trod, and where only the hum of insect life stirred the solitude of that wild island of the South Atlantic.

For a considerable distance we traversed flat ground that was covered with sedge grass, interspersed by shrubs of bright green. Beyond this level plain rose a series of ridges covered by trees,

and those ridges formed the first slope of the great mountain which was some thousand feet in height, and also of the great bluff we had first descried at sea.

We found Alphonso to be the largest of a group of three islands. It is a mass of rock nearly twelve miles in circumference. The other two are cavernous and inaccessible, and every approach to them is dangerous and difficult, in consequence of the foaming of the sea about them, so that during the weary days of our sojourn there, we made no attempt to explore them, lest the longboat—in our circumstances a priceless property—might be swamped or dashed to pieces.

Hislop informed me that he had read somewhere that in the month of March 1506—the same year in which the great Columbus died—two adventurers of Spain or Portugal, named Tristan da Cunha and Alphonso de Albuquerque, sailed for the Indies on a voyage of discovery, with fourteen great caravels.

During this expedition they found three great islands which they named after Tristan da Cunha, and elsewhere three others, which were named from Alphonso, who, after their fleet had been scattered by a great tempest, sailed through the Mosambique channel. He discovered many seas, isles, and channels hitherto unknown to the Portuguese or

Spaniards, and ultimately reached the Indies, of which he became viceroy for Ferdinand the Catholic, and died in 1515, holding that office.

It is very strange that since that remote period, no European country has turned these islands to any account, as they do not lie more than fifty leagues from the general track of the shipping bound for the coast of Coromandel or the Chinese seas, and in time of war would form a useful and important rendezvous for a fleet.

They lie exactly in that portion of the wide dan mighty ocean where it was fabled and believed a great continent would yet be found.

The three isles of Tristan da Cunha, which lie some hundred miles distant, have now a mixed population of English, Portuguese, and mulattoes; and a strong garrison was maintained there during the captivity of the Emperor Napoleon at St. Helena.

Being thus cast away upon a shore so far from the general track of ships, we resolved to make preparations for a probable residence of some time—to build a hut wherein to store our provisions, and to use every means for adding to our stock, by angling in the creeks, which seemed to abound with fish, and by hunting in the woods, which teemed with goats and boars running wild; by collecting birds' eggs, as the cliffs seemed to be literally alive

with petrels, albatrosses, and sea-hens ; and all these exertions were the more necessary as none could foresee the probable length of our sojourn there.

A ship might heave in sight to-morrow ; but a year *might* pass before one came near enough to be attracted by our signs.

We resolved to have a signal-post erected on the mountain top, a beacon-fire prepared, and amid these and many other deliberations, the night closed in and found us tolerably contented with our island, and even disposed to be merry over misfortunes that we could not control.

But considerable speculation was excited when Billy Wilkins the cabin boy, who had been in pursuit of a little kid along the beach, returned to us, dragging after him a long spar which he had found among the layers of shingles, bright shells, and dusky weeds, deposited by the sea ; and on examination this spar proved to be one of the lower studdingsail booms of the *Eugenie*, and the *same* which had parted from the brig and fallen overboard with Antonio on the eventful evening of his punishment !

"It is our own property," said Billy, "and may be useful when we have a fire to light."

"Boy Bill, we have a better use for it than burning," said Tattooed Tom ; "'tis the mast for our

signal-post, already made to hand, and we'll step it on the hill top to-morrow."

For that night we bivouacked under a large tree, the name and genus of which were alike unknown to us. At times some were conversing, some slept, others lay waking and thinking, with the murmur of the shining sea, close by, in their ears; and I could see the stars of the Southern Cross shining with wonderful brilliance at the verge of the watery horizon.

The novelty of our situation kept me long awake, and with my head pillowed on a bundle of dry seaweed, with the sail of the longboat spread over us as an impromptu tent and for protection from the dew, I lay in meditation and full of melancholy thoughts ere sleep came upon me, and with it confused dreams of the burning ship, of my secluded home, and of

"—— the schoolboy spot,

We long remember, though there long forgot."

•

Again I was at Eton! Again I saw the smooth green playing-fields alive with ardent schoolboys in the merry summer sunshine; and again I heard the clamour of their young voices and the balls rattling on bat and wicket; again I heard the pleasant green leaves rustle in the old woods of the Tudor times; or again I was in the shady quadrangles where the monotonous hum of many classes poring

over their studies stole through the mullioned windows on the ambient air ; and in my dreaming ear that "drowsy hum" seemed strangely to mingle with the chafing of the surge upon "th' unnumbered pebbles" of the lonely shore close by.

At last, overcome by weariness, by lassitude and toil, I slept soundly.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WE BUILD A HUT.

My old tutor at Eton used to say, quoting some "wise saw," that "a lazy boy made a lazy man, just as a crooked sapling makes a crooked tree."

It was fortunate for me, however, while on the island of Alphonso, that my habits were those of activity, and that I was never lymphatic by nature.

After dawn next morning we set about the erection of a hut, though we had no other tools than a small hatchet and our clasp-knives. With these we cut or tore down a great number of large branches, and stuck them in the earth, selecting a place where two angles of impending rock conveniently enough formed two solid walls for our edifice, leaving us but two others to erect.

As Tom Lambourne said, "the fellow who cannot use a hammer or axe, is only *half a man*," so we all worked hard with such implements as we had, until our hut was complete.

We left an entrance next the rocks by which to

creep in and out, and then thatched or built over the intertwisted branches with turf, torn up by our hands, and with broad plantain leaves, creepers, and all kinds of tendrils that had toughness and consistency, woven to form a roof.

At the erection of this most primitive wigwam we toiled the whole day, save during the scorching interval of noon, and ere nightfall it was complete, with piles of dried leaves and seagrass for couches and bed-room furniture.

Therein we placed all our provisions—the three bags of bread, two kegs of rum (which by unanimous consent were placed under the sole supervision of Hislop); our four casks of water were also brought ashore, though there was no lack of pure springs on the island.

In this wigwam were also placed our blankets, the sails and tackle of the longboat, and then the succeeding days were spent in accumulating provisions (as we looked forward with dread to our *last* biscuit), and a signal-post was erected on the mountain.

With Probart the carpenter, and Henry Warren (two of our stoutest hands), Tom Lambourne and I went upon this duty.

Alternately carrying on our shoulders or dragging in our hands the studdingsail boom, we toiled through wild and untrodden wastes. towards the

summit of the great and yet nameless conical mountain that rears its lonely scalp to the height of five thousand feet above the waves of the Southern sea.

The hope that on reaching its summit we *might* descry a sail, was an additional incentive to toil up the steep slope without lingering by the way.

On leaving a flat savannah of sedge-grass we reached a series of wooded ridges which form the base of the mountain, at every step rousing clouds of birds, especially a species of black-cock, and twice in the jungle we came upon the lair of wild boars of great size and such ferocity of aspect that we were glad to shrink astern of Tattooed Tom, who carried the hatchet.

This jungle was exceedingly difficult of penetration, owing to its density, the number of wild aloes, with creeping plants, prickly pears, and other tropical weeds, of what kind I know not, twined about them. It was a literal wilderness of serrated grass blades, yellow gourds, and great squashy pumpkins like gigantic vegetable marrows, all woven into an inextricable network of leaves, tendrils, and branches.

In other places we had to force a passage through thickets of richly flowered shrubs and tall plants with mighty leaves, the general greenery of the landscape being increased by the many runnels of fine spring water which poured down the fissures of the mountain into the plain we had left.

By the sides of these runnels we frequently paused, and making a cup of a large leaf, filled it with the cool, limpid water that gurgled over the rocks, to quench our constant thirst ; and for a time such vegetable cups were the only drinking vessels we had while on the island of Alphonso.

At last we gained the summit of the mountain, and with mingled satisfaction and anxiety in our hearts, swept the horizon with eager eyes.

Not a sail was in sight !

Far as our eyesight could reach around us, in a mighty circle, rolled the waters of the Southern Atlantic, almost tepid with heat, and pale and white, as they seemed to palpitate under the rays of the unclouded sun.

At our feet lay the whole isle of Alphonso and its two rocky appendages, with the encircling sea boiling in the narrow chasms between them, with a fury which was the result of contrary currents, and which formed a singular contrast to its calmness elsewhere.

After a brief rest we prepared to set up the signal-post.

Tom took off his shirt, and drawing from his pocket a piece of spunyarn, which a seaman is seldom without, he lashed his under-garment to the end of the studdingsail-boom, and by the aid of the hatchet and our hands. we scraped a hole suffi-

ciently deep in which to erect the spar, and then jammed it hard and fast with stones. As the shirt was blown out flag fashion upon the wind, we hoped it would prove a sufficient indication to a vessel approaching from any quarter, that there were people on the island in want of succour.

For some hours we lingered on the mountain-top, in the fond hope of seeing a sail, and then returned slowly downward to the beach, where our shipmates awaited us at the wigwam which now formed our home, and which we jocularly designated the capital city of Alphonso.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A WILD BOAR.

WE felt very much the want of firearms. The air seemed alive with birds—the woods with game of several kinds; and now an old musket with a few charges of powder would have proved more useful to us than the treasure of the Bank of England.

Hislop recovered strength rapidly, and his convalescence inspired our little band of castaways with new confidence and vigour, as they had implicit reliance in his superior knowledge and intelligence.

We were never idle; for, unarmed as we were, the task of procuring food for our general store was by no means a sinecure to those who undertook it.

Tom Lambourne and John Burnet, the cook, first brought us a valuable contribution in the shape of a great sea-lion, which was furnished with a rough and shaggy mane, that added greatly to its terrible aspect, for it was an unwieldy brute, as large as a small-sized cow

They had fallen in with it when it lay basking on the beach. Burnet courageously attacked it with one of the stretchers of the long-boat,* and dealt it a severe stroke on the head.

The animal uttered a hoarse grunt and turned upon him open-mouthed, when he thrust the staff down its throat, and held it there till Lambourne hewed off the head with his hatchet.

One or two others were afterwards despatched in the same way ; but we had to lie long in wait, and could catch them only by cutting off their retreat to the water.

Their hearts and tongues were considered the best food by the sailors, who broiled them over a fire which we kindled by striking two stones together, and letting the sparks fall upon a heap of dry leaves ; and to the discovery of these *impromptu* flints we were indebted to Ned Carlton.

As for salt, I found plenty of it, baked in the crevices of the rocks upon the beach, where the spray had dried it in the hot sunshine.

The wild boars that lurked in the woods baffled our efforts for a long time. By the edge of the hatchet we possessed I fashioned for my own use a kind of spear, about six feet long, hewn out of a

* Stretchers are pieces of wood placed across the bottom of a boat, whereon the oarsmen place their feet that they may have additional purchase in rowing.

piece of fine teak wood, which I found upon the beach.

This weapon I made and pointed with great care, and armed with it frequently lay in watch for the sea lions, but without success.

On the shore, at this season, when the sunshine was reflected from the sloping faces of the volcanic rocks and from the surface of the sea, the heat was beyond all description—intense, breathless, and suffocating, so that the lungs would collapse painfully, in the difficulty of respiration.

To breathe was like attempting it at the mouth of a newly opened furnace, and so I usually retired inland and sought the cool solitude of the deep thickets, or wandered through groves of solemn, impressive, and majestic old trees; for some were there so old, that they must have cast the shadows of their foliage on Alphonso de Albuquerque, or Tristan da Cunha, and their bearded followers.

How many ocean storms had swept their leaves into the waste of waters since then!

We had now been five days on the island without a sail being seen, though more than half our time was spent in watching the horizon; and so Tom Lambourne's old shirt still waved in vain from the boom-end on the mountain-top.

On the fifth day, however, to our surprise, the

signal was no longer visible, so we supposed that a gust of wind had overthrown it in the night.

Lambourne, Carlton, and Probart started for the mountain-top to restore it, while Hislop and I rambled into the woods, where we had a view of the shining sea to the westward. The waves came in long rollers, as there was a fresh breeze blowing from the west, and the foam rose white and high on the tremendous bluffs of the Inaccessible Isles, as we named them.

All the water between them was a sheet of sparkling and snowy froth, amid which, had we been nearer, we should doubtless have seen the black heads of the sea lions, as they sported in the spray and sunshine.

On asking Hislop how far he thought we were from the continents of Africa and South America, he replied without hesitation—

“We are about fifteen hundred miles from the mouth of the Rio de la Plata on the westward, and twelve hundred odd from the Cape of Good Hope on the east; but there is land nearer to us ——”

“Land nearer !” I reiterated.

“There are the three isles of Tristan da Cunha, and about five hundred miles south-west of us a desolate rock called the Isle of Diego Alvarez; and fortunate it is indeed for us that we were not cast

away *there*, as it yields only mossy grass, and now and then a few seals or sea-elephants may be seen upon the reefs about it. But, Dick Rodney, does it not make one long to be afloat again, with a good ship underfoot, both tacks and the breeze too, aft? —a cloud of canvas, carrying the three masts into one when seen astern—the lower studdingsail booms rigged out and dipping in the flying spray as she rolls from side to side—does it not, I say, bring all this to mind, when from here we can watch the waves that rose, perhaps, upon the shores of Mexico rolling in foam between these rocky isles? Do you remember Homer's description of the curling wave?" And without waiting my reply he began to recite from the *Iliad*, with wonderful facility :—

“As on the hoarse resounding shore, when blows the stormy
west,
The billowy tide comes surging wide, from ocean's dark blue
breast ;
First in mid-sea 'tis born, then swells and rages more and
more,
And rolling on with snowy back, comes thundering near the
shore ;
Then rears its crest, firm and sublime, and with tumultuous
bray
Smites the grim front of the rugged rock, and *spits* the briny
spray.”

How far Hislop in his classical enthusiasm might have pursued his free translation, till we had all the

deeds of Agamemnon and others on that tremendous day before the walls of Troy, I cannot say, had not a crashing sound in the adjacent thicket roused and alarmed us.

We started up, and had just time to conceal ourselves behind the trunk of a tree, when a herd of seven wild boars came plunging out of the thicket to drink at a runnel which flowed towards the sea.

They were unlike any of the swinish race we had ever seen before ; and but for our vague sensations of alarm we could have watched them with pleasure, as they inserted their long fierce snouts in the water that sparkled under the forest leaves.

They were all broad-shouldered animals, with high crests and thick bristly manes ; and all were black in colour or darkly brindled.

Unlike those of the sty-fed hogs to which we had been accustomed at home, their erected bristles shone like silver or polished steel in the rays of sunshine that fell through the waving branches ; their eyes were flashing and clear, and their skins were all clean as if washed for a show of prize pigs.

Thin flanked, active, and strong, they began to grunt and gambol, and to splash up the glittering water, till suddenly they caught sight of us, and all fled save one, a fierce old boar, which, after tearing up the grass with his hind feet, came resolutely forward, showing a pair of tusks that made

me tremble for the calves of my legs if I ventured to run off, and still more for those of poor Hislop, who was alike unable to escape or confront him.

Fortunately I had my teak-wood spear.

While keeping a tree between me and the boar, he prepared for the offensive by whetting his terrible tusks against a stone and grunting hoarsely.

Excited and bewildered, as he came on at a quick run, I charged my weapon full at him, and by the mercy of Providence, the point entered one of his fierce glittering eyes, which made him rear and recoil, while in his rage and pain the bristles on his ridgy back rose up like little blades of steel.

"Into his throat with your spear!" cried Hislop; but I anticipated the suggestion, for ere the words had left his lips, I had buried—thrusting deep with all the force that excitement and terror gave me—the pointed teak-wood shaft down his red and gaping throat.

Choking in blood, in foam and fury, the great boar writhed upon his back, and in doing so twitched from my hands the weapon, which still remained wedged in his throat and tongue, and rendered him almost powerless. I knew not what to do now, for if he snapped it through, and thus released himself, we, or I at least, would be lost.

But as he lay there on his back and sides alternately, snorting, roaring, and covering the grass with

bloody froth, and tearing it by his bristles, Hislop sprang forward, and though weak with many half-healed wounds, drove a clasp-knife repeatedly into the throat and stomach of the monster, which soon lay still enough.

When it was quite dead, I drew out my teak-wood spear, and found the point almost uninjured, for I had hardened it in fire.

We thrust two crooked branches through the tendons of the boar's hind-legs, and by these drew it to our hut, which was about half a mile distant ; there our prize caused great congratulation among our crew, and I obtained no little praise for performing so hardy a feat.

Our return diverted for a time some excitement and surprise which had been caused by the return of Tom Lambourne, Probart, and Carlton from the mountain-top, with tidings that the studdingsail boom had *vanished*, and that not a trace of it was to be found anywhere !

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A NEW PERPLEXITY.

THE disappearance of the boom and of Tom's old striped shirt, which had waved from it like a banner, excited considerable speculation and something of alarm.

If simply overturned by the wind, it must have lain where it fell ; at all events, it could not have rolled far from the cairn, or pile of stones, in the centre of which we had wedged it. By what agency had this disappearance come to pass ?

That it was the work of wild animals could not for a moment be conceived ; so the event filled us with vague but very alarming conjectures.

With his hatchet, Probart the carpenter cut down and prepared a long and slender tree to replace the lost boom on the top of the Devil's Mountain, as we now termed it ; and while one portion of us assisted him in this, the other set about the capture of some of the wild goats with which the woods of

the island abounded, as we were anxious to procure the milk of the females and the flesh of their kids.

This was a most arduous task, as they were so fleet of foot ; and when pursued, or when in search of those bitter and astringent plants of which they are so fond, they could gain the most dangerous pinnacles and ledges of rock that overhung the sea. In such places there grew a kind of wild laburnum, and Hislop did not fail to remind me that Theocritus described it as the favourite food of the goat.

We often saw these agile quadrupeds spring, without pause, fear, or hesitation, from pinnacle to pinnacle, or from ledge to ledge of rock, where, had they missed footing, they must have fallen a thousand feet or more, either into the ocean on one side, or some ravine on the other ; and there, perched far aloft, they would remain, looking at us quietly, and reminding me of the couplet :—

“ High hung in air the hoary goat reclined,
His streaming beard the sport of every wind.”

By great industry, and the exertion of incredible labour and activity, we succeeded in capturing five, by isolating them from their flocks and chasing them into chasms and corners from which they had no means of escape, and then we secured them by the running rigging of the long-boat.

Some of the females afforded milk, a rarity and

nourishment to us who had been so long at sea. The flesh of a kid we thought delicious ; and lest we should tire of roasted and broiled, Jack Burnet, the ship's cook, contrived to boil some pieces of a goat in its own skin, stretched upon sticks, with a fire underneath, salt for a spice, and sliced pumpkin for vegetables.

Of the horns, when carefully scraped and cleaned, we made very efficient drinking-cups, in which our rum, duly mixed with water, was doled out to us by Hislop, the keeper of our provision-store.

The eggs of the sea-birds were a constant object of search, and being an expert climber, I frequently collected great numbers of these laid in the crevices of the rocks by the sea-gull and storm-finch.

Our life was one of perpetual exposure and daily activity. Though overpoweringly hot at noon, the atmosphere of the morning and evening was delightful ; and as these portions of the day were spent in hunting for food, the time passed rapidly ; but Hislop's chief fear was, that if we were not taken off by some ship before the rainy season set in, our discomforts and danger from agues would become very great.

By the time we had been fourteen days on the island, he was recovered so far as to be able to join me in making an exploration of it, or rather in walking all round it.

The circumference of the largest isle is only four leagues ; but its shores are so steep and rocky in some places, that traversing them proved a most arduous task.

On the eastern side we found a great cascade pouring from a brow of rock upon the beach. The latter was covered almost everywhere by a broad-leaved seaweed, the dark and slimy tendrils of which were several yards in length, and were termed by Hislop "the gigantic fucus."

So day after day passed, and amid our various means of procuring food, we never failed to keep a keen look-out to seaward for a passing sail ; but none came near that lonely islet of the southern sea.

One morning I found there had drifted ashore near our hut a mass of that mysterious substance, the origin of which has puzzled so many naturalists—ambergris. It must have weighed more than a hundred pounds in weight ; and when we threw some of it into the fire, it melted and diffused around a most agreeable perfume. This marine production, which is only to be found in the seas or on the shores of Africa and Brazil, is alleged by some to be a concretion formed in the stomach of the spermaceti whale.

On the fifteenth morning after our landing, a seaman named Henry Warren, who went to milk

our goats, which had been tethered to a large tree near the hut, returned in haste to announce that the ropes which had secured them were cut, apparently by a sharp instrument—cut clean through—and that the goats, the capture of which had cost us so much labour, were gone.

“Cut? By whom?” asked every one.

Before we had time to consider this, Hislop came out of the hut, and stated that one of our three bread bags had also been cut open, by a slash from a knife apparently, and that several pounds of biscuit had been abstracted.

The strange alarm, and what was worse, the *doubt* of each other, which these discoveries excited, were painful and bewildering.

We examined the place where the goats had been tethered, but could discover no traces of feet, and nothing remained but the ends of the ropes (the long-boat sheets and halliards) tied to the stem of a tree.

Whoever among us had done this was guilty of wanton malice and treason to the rest of his friends—for friends we hoped we were, as well as brothers in misfortune.

We also examined the mutilated bread bag. In the side thereof was a clean slash a foot in length, made by some sharp instrument, and by this aperture the biscuits had been abstracted by some one who had inserted his hands through the fragile wall

of our hut, which, as I have stated, was composed only of turf and branches.

This theft had been committed in the night ; but by whom ?

Was the thief one of ourselves ? The eyes of each seemed to ask the hateful question of the others, and to repel their inquiring glances ; but soon after three of our missing biscuits were discovered by Tom Lambourne, lying a few yards apart among the long grass, as if the abstractor had dropped them during a hasty flight towards the woods or the Devil's Mountain.

"In addition to ourselves there is *some one else* on this island," exclaimed Hislop, emphatically ; "and this accounts for the loss of the studding-sail boom ; and without delay, this *some one else* must be discovered."

We dreaded lest savages might be concealed in some of the caverns or woods, and that they might come upon us in the night and slay all, or that they might make off with or destroy the long-boat, our most valuable possession.

It was at once resolved that one of our number (to be regularly relieved) should remain in it day and night, armed with the hatchet, our only weapon, and that he should be well flogged if he slept, or neglected the double duty of watching the hut and boat, which were close by each other.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE MYSTERY INCREASES.

AN immediate search was resolved upon. Lots were cast for the one who was to remain behind to guard our property, and the duty fell upon *me*.

Armed with the boat stretchers, or with clubs which they had carefully selected and cut from the trees, Hislop departed with all my companions ; and after proceeding over the grassy plain, they soon disappeared in the woods that covered all the lower slope of the great mountain.

I cannot describe the sensations of loneliness that came over me on finding myself for the first time single, alone, and left entirely to my own reflections and resources.

The carpenter's hatchet was my only weapon ; and armed with it I sat on a grassy slope midway between the hut and sea, gazing anxiously inland, listening for any passing sound ; but all remained still save the chafing of the waves on one hand,

and the loud buzz of tropical insect life in the thickets or among the long grass on the other.

What, I asked myself, if savages were actually lurking in the woods, and on seeing that all my companions were gone, they should come tumultuously down upon the hut and boat? I would at once become their victim.

Or what would be my fate if my friends fell into an ambush, or perished in detail?

Could any human beings be lurking in the two adjacent isles? was my next surmise.

We had never seen anything alive on them—not even wild goats or boars; and if there *were* other inhabitants, the steepness of the rocks, which rose sheer from the water, and the fury of the surf that rolled between, forbade any attempt to cross.

So in such painful surmises and in keen watching I passed the most of the day alone.

In the afternoon, one by one, all my shipmates returned to our little headquarters on the shore, weary and jaded—torn by briars and brambles in the thickets—and all had the same tale to tell. They had seen and heard of nothing save wild boars, wild goats, and sea-birds.

Hislop now detected that one of our number should guard the hut by night, and a second the boat, with orders to hail each other in this fashion :—

“Boat, ahoy !”

“Hut, ahoy !”

This was to insure a watchful look-out ; but with all these precautions, wise and necessary though they were, our feeling of security and even of reliance on each other, was gone, for the time.

As these occurrences excited the imagination of our companions, some of those who watched the hut and boat by night asserted that when *all* our party, save themselves, were safely lodged and asleep, something like the figure of a very tall man had appeared for an instant on the bluffs that overhung the sea, between them and the moonlight.

But of this mysterious personage, if such existed anywhere, except in the overstrained imagination of a lonely midnight watcher, we could discover no trace during day.

One night, when Francis Probart and Ned Carlton were on watch, a sound like the distant report of a pistol was heard by them, and at the same instant both saw a flock of petrels and storm-finches rise up in the moonlight from the face of a bluff, where they revolved above the breakers, like a swarm of gnats in a sunbeam.

So if Ned and the carpenter were mistaken in the sound, the birds were also roused and alarmed.

Marc Hislop ridiculed their story, but he was considerably bewildered, and so were we all when two days after, a seaman named Hugh Chute, when

rambling in the woods, found one of our goats, which we knew by the fragment of rope still tied round its neck, lying dead, with a *bullet* in its throat !

He brought it to the hut, where the wound was cut open and the bullet extracted. It was small, and had evidently been fired from a pistol ; this event caused the most exciting speculations, amid which the carcase was hastily buried, as not one of us would eat of it.

What or who could this person be ? were the prevailing questions ; and what was his reason for concealing himself from us in the thick woods of the island ?

In the thorough exploration of the latter, caused by these episodes, our people fortunately discovered a fine grove of banana trees, and returned laden with their yellow and luscious fruit.

At the same time Tattooed Tom found some letters “in a foreign lingo,” as he said, cut on the face of a steep rock, overhanging the river, which formed the cascade at the beach. To this rock he conducted Hislop and me next day, and after tearing aside some masses of creepers and scraping off a rich coating of moss, we found this old legend on the smoothed face of the basalt :—

EL NOBLE CABALLERO, D. ALPHONSO DE ALBUQUERQUE ;
A.D. 1506.

RVGVEN A DIOS POR EL.

"The year of the discovery of the island!" said Hislop.

"Have other eyes ever seen this inscription since?" added I.

"It is very doubtful. This Alphonso also discovered the Albuquerque Kays, as he named the three islets which lie off the Mosquito shore in the Caribbean Sea."

Hislop copied the inscription into his note-book, and just as we turned to leave the spot a large stone about sixty pounds in weight came crashing down the cliff, hurled apparently from its summit, and if so, by no inexperienced hand, for it struck the rock of the legend within a foot of where Hislop stood, and was shattered into a hundred pieces, covering him over with dust.

Had it struck *him* instead, he had been slain and mangled on the spot. Had a fragment broken any of his limbs, in how miserable a plight would he have been on that desolate island, without proper shelter or surgical aid!

Looking up to the summit of the cliff, which was about a hundred and fifty feet in height, I perceived among the dense fringe of wild gourds, shrubs, leaves, and plantain trees, then waving in the wind, something like a human face, that, after peering over at us, was suddenly withdrawn.

"That stone was never dislodged either by goats

or by accident," said Hislop; "there is not a vestige of clay upon the fragments—besides, all the face of the cliff is smooth and solid rock!"

"And it is the only place we did *not* overhaul yesterday, master Hislop," said Tom Lambourne.

"Then *there* must be the thief of our biscuits—of our goats—"

"Of our stun'sail boom and my old guernsey. Let us have all hands turned up for a hunt again," exclaimed Tom.

I now mentioned what I had seen.

"A man!—do you think it was a man's head?"

"I cannot be certain, Hislop," said I; "it seemed a face of some kind, and a very hairy one, too."

"It might be an old pumpkin," suggested Tom, in his matter-of-fact way.

"Or a goat—at all events, it could not have been a baboon?" said I.

"No, no; there is no such animal hereabout, master Rodney," replied Tom.

"Man or monkey, goat or devil, we'll overhaul the place this very afternoon," exclaimed Hislop, with increasing energy and anger; "but first we shall return with all expedition to the hut."

CHAPTER XXXV

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

ALL day the air had been unusually sultry and breathlessly hot, even for the tropics at that season; but when the sun sank westward, when the air became cooler, and the shadows of the island, with its wooded bluff and towering blue mountain, across the slope of which the light gossamer clouds lay floating half-way up, were thrown far eastward over that lonely sea which no keel seemed ever to furrow, we prepared for a further exploration, or as Hugh Chute said, "to overhaul that ere cliff from truck to keelson."

Chute and Carlton were despatched to its base, by the way of the river bank, and to where the cascade poured over the rocks, waking the solemn echoes of the otherwise silent ravine.

Their instructions were, to station themselves near the rock which bore the Spanish legend—to keep a sharp look-out on the face of the cliff and

all the way up to the grove of banana trees that grew on its summit.

Billy the cabin boy was left in charge of the hut and boat, while Hislop, with the rest of us advanced towards the cliff, up the sloping bank of which—its only accessible point—we proceeded to climb.

It was, or is (twelve months can make no change) a hundred and fifty feet in height, as I have stated, rising sharply up from the side of the great mountain, and is covered by a jungle of wild shrubs that must have been growing there since the days of the deluge.

The creepers with gummy branches, the sharp serrated grass, the yellow gourd vines, the wild tendrils and plants of which we knew neither the names nor the nature, were there interwoven as closely as a herring net, to the depth of seven or eight feet from their roots.

Amid this jungle the hum of the myriads of great insects which we roused and dislodged was deafening; while the black clouds of gadflies and cockroaches were very bewildering, and, to say the least, annoying.

We floundered and fell as we waded through this sea of leaves and verdure, but rose and scrambled on again, pausing ever and anon, breathless and exhausted, to sit and fan ourselves, or to aid in

pulling each other out of this jungly network, for it resembled that which sprang by magic spell around the palace of the sleeping beauty in the old fairy tale, to baffle all intruders for a hundred years.

Hislop, who had not yet recovered his strength, was among the first to give in, and declare, when half way up, that "he could climb no further!"

Two or three took advantage of this admission to remain with him for a time; but I, refreshed by a ripe banana which had fallen from the trees at the top, and which I found just at hand, pushed on, and being lighter than any of my companions, got ahead of them all.

After half an hour's severe toil, during which my hands and knees were lacerated and torn by sharp blades of gigantic grass, and by the gummy creepers to which one's very flesh adhered at times, I reached at last the banana trees, the foliage of which waved like a gigantic plume on the summit of this isolated rock.

The banana rises with a stem which is about six or seven inches in diameter at the root, and from thence tapers upward to the height of eighteen or twenty feet, to where the leaves spring like a bright green tuft, broad, wavy, feathery, and drooping, as those of the palm do.

I uttered a shout—an "*Io pæan!*"—to my com-

panions, announcing that I had gained the summit before them, and armed with my only weapon, the teak-wood spear, pushed my way forward between the smooth stems of the bananas, till I reached the abrupt brow of the cliff, from the verge of which I saw, far down below, the bright blue stream that rose on the slopes of the great mountain, running through the heart of the isle and glittering in the setting sun among groves and ravines, to where it poured in foam upon the white sandy beach, and mingled with the mighty Southern Sea.

I saw also the figures of Chute and Carlton, as they stood near the rock which bore the inscription, but they could neither distinguish me nor hear my shout, which gave fresh ardour to those whom I had left half-way down, and who now resumed their ascent.

I looked keenly and cautiously about me on every side, but saw only the slender and countless stems of the tall bananas, whose broad leaves, as they spread under or over each other, interrupted the rays of the sun, and formed a shade that was both pleasing and gloomy.

Now, when about to cross what seemed a hole or hollow in the jungle, by stepping from the strong tendril of one creeper to another, a naked arm and great human hand came up from amid the mass of leaves !

I was seized by the right foot, and in an instant found myself dragged down through foliage and intertwined plants—down—down—I knew not where; and before I had time or breath to cry or resist, I lay prostrate on my back in a hole—a lair *under* the matted jungle—with a man above me, his knees planted on my breast, his strong hands upon my bare throat, and his fierce wild eyes glaring like those of a hyæna into mine.

Then, how terrible were my emotions on recognising, in the light that fell through the mass of foliage above, as through a vine-covered trellis—now overspread with hair, as beard and whiskers all were matted into a mass—the dark and ferocious face of Antonio, whom I believed to be drowned and lying at the bottom of the sea—Antonio el Cubano!

“Silenzio!” said he, in a low voice, like the hiss of a serpent in my ear; but the injunction was unnecessary, for so completely was I taken by surprise—so utterly at his mercy, and so destitute alike of breath or weapon—that resistance was impossible.

Perceiving that I was almost strangled he relaxed his fierce grasp a little, but still kept the sharply pricking point of his knife at my throat, as a hint to remain quiet.

It would be impossible for me to describe the emotions of my soul during this time, which seemed

an eternity to me! Utter fear was one, for I thought the fellow had something supernatural—something truly of the *demon*—about him; that he could neither be drowned nor destroyed; and I lay still in that dark hollow, panting in his fierce clutch without a thought of resistance.

Now I heard my name shouted repeatedly.

“Rodney—Mr. Rodney—Dick Rodney—where are you?”

It was Tom Lambourne and others, my companions, who had now attained the summit of the rock, and were scrambling over the jungle, and pushing between the stems of the bananas, searching for me, rather than for the first object of such mystery.

My disappearance alarmed them.

“Can he have gone adrift over the bluff,” I heard Tom Lambourne say, “or is he only having a game with us by hiding himself?”

“Oh yes!—that is it,” replied Probart, the carpenter; “he can’t have gone aloft into one of these bananas, for they are as clear of branches as a spare topmast; so let us sheer off to the mate, and Mr. Rodney will soon come down after us.”

“Well, my lads, there are neither wild men nor wild beasts here,” said Lambourne; “so we shall return back to Master Hislop, who is hanging in the wind halfway down, and then be off to the hut.

We've earned a stiff glass of grog by this bout, anyhow."

My emotions became almost suffocating, when I heard them turn away to descend and rejoin Hislop without me.

I saw and heard them pass and repass over us, the creepers of the jungle yielding with their weight.

The leg and foot of one, named Henry Warren, came down through the green network of leaves, and actually touched me.

I drew a long gasping breath, and the atrocious Cubano, believing I was about to cry aloud, compressed my throat so tightly with his muscular hands, that a thousand lights seemed to flash before my eyes, and I must have become senseless for some minutes, as the next incident that dwells in my memory is seeing him sitting in a **crouching** attitude, with his elbows on his knees; his black-bearded chin resting in the hollow of his right hand, and with his knife—his murderous Albacete *cuchillo*—clenched in his white teeth, while he surveyed me with a strange and sardonic smile in his deeply-set black eyes, which glittered like those of a snake in the rays of sunlight that struggled through the woven roof of leaves above us.

I heard no more the voices of my shipmates. They were gone, and I was left alone and unarmed

with this man or devil,—as yet I knew not which he was ; but I knew that if he had the will, he had assuredly the power, to kill and leave me in his lair, or to cast me, a mangled heap, to the bottom of the cliff whereon he lurked.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A TERRIBLE INTERVIEW.

HE perceived the fear or horror he excited, and it seemed to amuse or flatter him.

I remembered his dreams, his outcries, and midnight terrors, when in the fore-castle bunks; I thought of poor Captain Weston, of old Roberts the man-o'-war's man, who disappeared so mysteriously in the night, and of others whose blood was upon this man's hands and on his soul, and my flesh crept with loathing at our proximity.

What must his thoughts have been amid the awful solitude of that lonely isle before our arrival? I dared not attempt to imagine or to analyze them.

Why were the waves so sparing—why was Fate so favourable to a wretch like this? How came it to pass that a life so vile had been so marvellously protected? and when would the day of retribution come?

All these thoughts came upon me with rapidity. Antonio seemed almost to read my heart, for he laughed, and said in Spanish—

“El diablo! so we meet again. Ha! ha! I suppose you thought—*Oho Juan bobo!*—it was all over with the Cubano when the studdingsail boom parted, and amid the laughter of these English dogs I fell away to leeward—to drown—to die in the trough of the sea—eh?”

I did not reply to the mocking question, as I was not yet in possession of all my faculties.

“Aha! Antonio el Cubano does not die so easily,” resumed the Spanish creole; “but now, what am I to do with *you*?”

“You will release me, I hope, as I have never harmed you.”

“For what purpose did you come up these rocks, hombre?” he asked, with a keen glance.

“Only to survey the island from a new point of view,” I replied, evasively.

“The top of the mountain would be a better place for that purpose,” he replied, grimly.

“But it is a much more laborious ascent.”

“So the *Eugenie* has been cast away?”

“She was struck by lightning, took fire, and was burned to the water edge.”

On hearing this, Antonio ground his sharp teeth, and said, with a savage malediction,

"Por grados, as I said before, I will rid the world of you all !"

"For myself," I began, with some agitation——

"If I permit you to return alive to these men," he replied, sternly, "you will enable them to track me out. But see you *this*," he added, showing me a revolver; "I will make them all food for the sea-gulls and the wild boars if they attempt to molest me."

It was one of those which had hung in Captain Weston's cabin. It appeared to be loaded and capped; and though very rusty, was still sufficiently dangerous. I remembered that he had put it in his breast before he fell overboard.

"As for you," he resumed, and paused.

"I never harmed *you*, as you have frequently said."

"But you *laughed* as I swung at the end of the studdingsail boom. It was a fine joke to see a spar, with the world at one end and a poor devil holding on at the other! I can remember *that*, senor, though you may find it convenient to forget it."

"I am not aware, Antonio, that I did laugh," said I, in my most conciliatory tone.

"But I am quite aware of it, demonio!" said he, furiously.

"Oh! why am I always doomed to meet this man?" I exclaimed, bitterly.

"True," said he with another malevolent grin, "I am a very horrid fellow ; but we have met before we had the good luck to sail together."

"Before—I know it."

"At Teneriffe," said he ; "up among the mountains."

"You were the sentinel who stood at the mouth of the cavern?"

"I was *not*, muchacho."

"Who or which, then?"

"He who was shot," said he, grinning.

"And who fell into the ventana?"

"Si, hombre!" (yes, man) replied the Cubano, with a shout of fierce laughter.

Absurd as this statement was, it was not without a horrid effect upon me for a moment, as he added,

"Par los Santos! it is not so easy to kill Antonio!"

"Then I actually met you on the mountain side in Teneriffe?"

"So it would seem. A few of us had been ashore from the Costa Rican brig, the *Marshal Serrano*, in search of a diamond which is said to shine at night in the rocks there ; but as our search was vain, we thought of raising a few silver dollars on you and your companions, as all our trouble had gone for nothing."

"But how did you reach this island?" I asked,

willing, if possible, by conversing with him to gain his better mood.

"I was swept astern of the brig when the studsail boom parted, but I clung to it with a death clutch, and the waves, as they rose and fell, soon hid the *Eugenie* from me; but before that, every time I rose, half blinded, winking, and spluttering on the summit of a wave, and saw her sails and spars and cabin windows glittering and looming large in the clear twilight, I sent a bitter malediction after her. However, I soon wearied of that, as it spent my breath, and when that went, the water always closed over my head."

"Had you no fear, Antonio?"

"Fear—of what?" he asked, scornfully.

"Of death—of drowning," said I, earnestly.

"I cannot tell what I felt; at least I had no thought of swimming, for there was no land that I knew of to swim to nearer than Brazil, which was perhaps fifteen hundred miles distant; so as life is dear" (I thought of the lives he had destroyed) "I clung to the spar in the hope of being picked up by some passing ship.

"I slipped off a coat, two waistcoats, and a pair of boots which had belonged to the Captain, and every nook of which I had crammed with money, watches, and other valuables of his and Hislop's" (and my mother's parting gift—thought

I), "and with another malediction, I let them go to the bottom of the sea, or the bellies of the sharks, I cared not which.

"The red sun had set, and night, with all its stars, came on. The silvered sea was pleasant, warm, and smooth. I felt certain I could float by the spar all night, but my sole fear was for a blue shark, and everything that sparkled in the water near me made me draw my knees up to my chin and my heart leap to my mouth, as I expected to be bitten in two or have all the flesh torn off my legs at a mouthful.

"By my necktie I lashed my left arm tightly to the spar, so that if weariness came over me, even for a moment, it might not be swept from me, because, if such an accident happened in the night, I might never recover it again. So there were the studdingsail boom and I floating, adrift and alone, in the middle of the South Atlantic.

"I found that we were borne by a current due eastward, and I hoped that it would carry me near some ship that might be running with it towards the Cape.

"Day dawned.

"And there, about a Spanish league off, I saw this island, with the light clouds floating midway between its blue summit and the golden-coloured sea. It was so like Teneriffe that I could have

sworn I saw the white houses of Santa Cruz, with the ships at anchor in the bay, the dark Valley of the Diamond opening inland, and the Spanish flag flying on the old castle; and so strong is fancy, that, *par todos santos !* I *did* see them all for a time. But some hours after, I was thrown by the waves with a shock upon the beach, where I lay long—I cannot tell how long—in a stupor, exhausted, worn-out, and all but dead.”

“It is a strange story,” said I, as the Cubano, who told it in very good Spanish, paused—

“As I came back to the world,” he resumed, “savage and bloody thoughts occurred to me! Again I was swinging above the waves at the boom-end; again I saw all your exulting faces line the bulwark of the *Eugenie*; again I was in the sea!

“Then, horrid monsters, red-eyed and covered with shining bristles, were about to devour me. I felt their cold noses and their hot breaths upon my face; and with a yell of terror, I half rose up to find myself lying high and dry above the tide-mark, but among the sea-weed and shingle, blubber, star and jelly fish of a warm beach, on which the evening sun was shining; and that the bristly monsters of my dreams were a herd of wild boars in council (*consejo*) about devouring me; but they scampered into the woods when slowly and feebly I staggered up, like one after a long debauch.

"My left arm was still lashed to the boom, from which I now released it.

"As I stood erect, shore and cliff, sea and mountain, swam round me, and then I became assailed by thirst and hunger.

"The nearest spring fully relieved one longing, and a wild gourd, which I nearly devoured, satisfied the other. I remained long in thought, considering where I had been cast, and as night came on, and the moon arose, the fear of savages or wild animals made me climb into a tree.

"I had no clothes but what you see—a pair of tattered calziones de marinero (sailor's trousers), and my sash ; but, diablo ! did I not utter a shout, when, on examining it, I found that in the folds there were still my knife—my old Albacete knife—and one of the captain's revolvers, with a little tin case, which I had taken from his cabin. I then conceived that it might contain jewellery—*now* I hoped it was food—a case of sardines at the least !

"It was soldered and water-tight, so I forced the lid with my knife, and found that it contained caps and ammunition for the revolver !

"Thus, without fear, I supplied myself with food, until the arrival of your crew upon the island. I was hidden among some mangroves on the day when the long-boat came into the creek. I knew you all, and my heart swelled with rage as I covered

you in succession with this pistol ; but, as every charge was, perhaps, a day's food to me, and I valued my scanty ammunition more than your wretched lives, I spared them, intending to cut you off otherwise, when any straggler came within reach of my knife ; and, as you know, with a large stone, I nearly marred for ever the seamanship of the contra-maestre. So that's all my yarn, and what do you think of it ?”

“ I think that when Heaven has so miraculously spared you, Antonio, your mind should have other thoughts than vengeance now.”

The dark Cubano gnashed his white teeth, and laughed bitterly ; but now, by his story, the disappearance of the boom from the mountain-top, the thefts from our bread-bag, the alleged pistol reports, and those appearances of a human figure on the bluffs in the moonlight, the wounded goat, and everything else which had so greatly perplexed us of late, was completely accounted for ; and fortunately for me, in the relation of his adventures the Cubano had talked himself into a state of comparative equanimity.

“ Now,” said I, rising, “ you will permit me to go, Antonio ; and if you do, I promise to leave you a dozen of biscuits to-morrow on the rock at the foot of the cliff.”

“ As a ransom ?”

“Yes.”

“Well, biscuits are more valuable than golden doubloons here ; but might they not be a snare ?” he asked, with a savage gleam in his eyes.

“I swear it is not !” I exclaimed, with the greatest earnestness.

“Bueno—very well—you may go. You see how I am armed ; so tell the contra-maestre and his men that if they attempt to molest me, they shall share the fate of those who died in the brig. So *vaya*—begone !”

This was all said in Spanish—he had spoken nothing else—and not without a wild dignity of manner that was rather impressive.

I lost no time in creeping or clambering out of his hiding-place.

“Buenos noches,” said I, for the sun was now set ; and, not without fear that Antonio might change his wayward mind, and send a bullet through my back, I scrambled, rolled, ran, and went at times headlong and endlong down the back of the cliff in my anxiety to get beyond his reach, and rejoin my companions, whom I found debating on my disappearance and assembled in solemn conclave near the hut, where Burnet, the ship-cook, was roasting a kid for supper, and where I was received by a shout of welcome.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE FATA MORGANA.

THE former horror of my companions for Antonio was now revived and increased by the mystery of his almost supernatural escape, and their eyes wandered upward to the brow of the steep cliff whereon he lurked. It was visible about two miles from where we were assembled on the beach, and presented a rugged and savage outline.

Some of them, among whom were Hislop and Probart the carpenter, urged that at all hazards we should still attempt to storm his nest, and punish him by lynch law.

"With his revolver, rusty as it is," said I, "he is as strong as he was when on board the *Eugenie*, and when he held the cabin against us all ; he could shoot each of us down at leisure, and with his knife finish what the bullet might leave undone."

"We can fire the jungle," said Tattooed Tom, "and burn him out like a rat."

Others proposed that we should act as we had

hitherto done—keeping a strict watch upon our boat and property, and permitting Antonio to remain unmolested until the arrival of a ship, to whose captain we should commit the whole affair.

We came to no decision, but talked a great deal while supping on the roasted kid in the moonlight at the door of the hut ; but ere long there occurred an incident so strange, and apparently so unaccountable, that it soon decided the intentions of our crew.

The moon had risen, as it only rises in these latitudes, with the brilliance of day, and with a white light that is dazzlingly pure. From where we were squatted among the sea-grass that bordered the shore, the whole sweep of the bight or bay which we had first entered, and on the margin of which we had built our hut beside the rocks, could be seen vividly in all its details.

It was an opening of about two miles from headland to headland. Each of these were bold and rugged bluffs of great height—one being that stupendous rock which was tufted with trees, and which (with the mountain now shrouded in light clouds) we had first descried from the sea.

The beach between was a complete bow of white sand, beyond which were thick groves of trees, and some wild palmettoes that tufted the dark rocks which formed the horns of the bay.

In a straight line from each of these horns ran a slender ridge of snow-white surf, that was for ever boiling up, rolling and breaking over a hidden coral reef, or sand-bank. Within it the bay, and without it the sea, were, on this night, smooth, waveless, and calm as the cloudless sky, whose deep immensity of blue was mirrored in them.

There was scarcely a breath of wind to stir the pendent forest leaves.

I have been somewhat minute in describing all this, in consequence of the phenomenon which occurred on this night, and thus fixed the features of the scene in my memory.

It might have been about the hour of ten, and we were still loitering on the moonlit beach, when the cry of "A sail in sight!" made every heart leap wildly and with hope.

'Twas Tom Lambourne who spoke, but every eye caught the ship at once, and even those who had been dozing on the warm sand or within the hut were awake and on the beach in a moment, stretching their hands towards her with joy and exultation, but the aspect of the ship gradually changed all this into suspense and utter bewilderment.

She was a large square-rigged vessel—a ship running close-hauled on the port-tack (to use a man-o'-war phrase) and with nearly all her canvas set.

She was about four miles off the reef at the entrance of the bay, and was bearing directly towards it. Her canvas glimmered like snow in the moonshine, and we could see the red lights of her cabin windows flash at times upon the sea astern, and the whiteness of her long flush deck, as she careened before the breeze.

Yet how was it, we all asked, that there was not a breath of wind with us?

"Perhaps she brings it with her," suggested Hislop.

"And how came it to pass that she appeared right in the offing and outside the bay *all at once*?" asked Tom Lambourne.

"She must have rounded the high bluff while we were all palavering," said Probart.

Nothing more was said for a time, but whether it was the effect of imagination or of an overstrained eyesight, I know not, she seemed to melt as it were in the brightness of the moonshine—to become so indistinct that we could see the line of the horizon through her topsails; and next, it seemed as if her hull, her spars, and rigging, were edged with bright prismatic hues.

But on she came, right for the bay, braced sharp to the wind; and now we saw her sail-trimmers set the flying jib, and haul the spanker further aft to steady her steerage.

At that moment the sea assumed a singularly luminous aspect ; and now she was but a mile off the surf-beaten reef.

On came the large ship, with everything set aloft and alow—a cloud of white canvas from her deck to her trucks ; but that which puzzled us most and silenced us all, was the circumstance that although there was not a breath of wind to stir the leaves on shore, as she approached she careened well over, like a vessel under the influence of a fine spanking breeze—rising and falling regularly and gracefully, as if she rode over the heaving of a succession of long waves—her courses, top-sails, topgallant-sails, royals, headsails, and spanker, all bellying out—the leaches forming complete arcs over her deck, her loose rigging all blown out in bends, and yet there was not an inch of foam under her forefoot, and she left no wake astern upon the sea.

What mystery was this ?

She was like the mere reflection of a ship cast by a magic lantern on a wall, save that she seemed instinct with life, for we had seen fresh canvas set upon her, while her royals and topgallant-sails shivered at times, as if the breeze *we* could not feel failed with her somewhat aloft, or the hand at her wheel was unsteady, and unable to keep her full and by. Then, just as she approached the entrance of the little bay, all her cabin lights went out !

"She will be ashore on the reef if she draws deep!" cried every voice. But no! she glided over it or through it, without shivering, shock, or hindrance, and ran into the bay.

"Her false keel must have gone through it like a knife," said Lambourne, with amazement.

"Perhaps her draught of water is small," suggested the carpenter, while the excitement of our men increased every moment.

"Why don't the lubbers take some canvas off her?" exclaimed one.

"Or heave her in the wind?" added another.

"There's the jib-sheet let fly: down royals and in topgallant-sails! Why don't you heave her in the wind? Ready your anchors!" cried Hislop loudly in his astonishment, as he shouted to those on board, and rushed mid-leg into the water. "Heavens!" he added, "she still bears on, cracking under everything! She will be ashore in a minute, and then all her sticks will snap by the board like tobacco-pipes!"

A cry escaped us all as her flying jib-boom appeared right over a grove of little trees; then her bow touched the white sandy beach; but there was neither shock nor pause as she seemed to sail right on and inland, still careening over and still rising, falling, and heaving, as if upon the sea.

As I gazed upon her a strange and paralyzing

sensation came over me, and all my faculties became frozen. The profound silence of the scene, the calm landscape of the moonlit isle, and the noiselessness of the ocean, made us stare at her and at each other as men in a trance. My breath became suspended, my heart seemed to stand still in all its pulses, while this mysterious—this most spectral ship—passed before us like a living thing, and then melted away in the moonshine, apparently right under the cliff of Antonio, leaving us to gaze at each other, in doubt as to whether we were mad or not.

Hislop was the first to recover himself, and striking his hands together, with the air of one to whose astonishment had succeeded the bitterness of a deep disappointment, he exclaimed—

“It is only the phenomenon called *Fata Morgana*!”

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MAROONED.

It is impossible for me to describe the blank astonishment, or rather the intense consternation of our men on the disappearance of this vessel, which was the object of so many hopes and wishes.

Some time elapsed before the poor fellows rallied sufficiently to speak on the subject ; and meanwhile there flashed upon my memory some strange and weird old Celtic tales, which a Highland boy at Eton was wont to tell us, of ships which in the days of Ossian traversed the steep hills and the salt lochs of Morven with equal facility.

"It *is* a ship—or rather the representation of a veritable ship—which cannot be far off the island, and is making for it at this moment," said Hislop, emphatically.

"How far off do you think she is, sir?" asked Hugh Chute, mockingly.

"Perhaps twenty miles —perhaps a hundred—it is impossible to say."

"Perhaps ten thousand?" queried Tom Lambourne, with great irritation.

"It was the ship of the Flying Dutchman!" said Probart, the carpenter.

"I've seen many a queer thing in my time, but never the like of this before!" exclaimed Carlton.

"Though foul weather don't matter much to us here, it will be sure to follow;—so I say, mates," resumed Probart, "it was the Flying Dutchman and nought else!"

"Vanderdecken or the devil come for Antonio," added Ned Carlton; "and whether he has shipped aboard that craft or not, hang me, shipmates, if we should stay another hour on the island with it, or with him, or where such things are seen."

"Yes, yes," said all the rest; "let us take to the long-boat again, and sheer off."

"For where?" asked Hislop, coming forward.

"Anywhere," replied Lambourne, sulkily.

"Stuff! You must hang on by the island, or it will be the worse for you," responded the wary mate.

"How will it be worse for us?" asked Probart.

"In more ways than one."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. And, moreover, it is *my* orders."

"Lookee, now, Master Hislop," said Henry Warren, our oldest seaman, with great gravity, "in

everything that is reasonable, I have obeyed you, and I will still obey you all the same as if the deck of the *Eugenie* was under our feet and the blue water round us ; but as for living on this here 'chanted island for a longer spell, with a murdering villain like the Spaniard Antonio, who can make ships sail on sea and land alike, for all the world like pictures in a lantern or a penny show, is more than flesh and blood can bear ; so I say, mates, let us embark all our provisions, set sail, clap dry nippers on our oars, and make out Gough's Island or Tristan da Cunha, leaving the devil and Antonio to keep company here as long as they please—and that is likely to be long enough, I can tell you."

"Tristan da Cunha can't be above three hundred miles off," added Probart ; and the proposition met with such universal approbation, that Marc Hislop became seriously alarmed.

He begged the crew to listen to him ; but they did so with evident reluctance and impatience, muttering the while and twitching their hats and trousers.

He said everything he could think of to assure them that the ship they had seen was quite an optical illusion ; and his arguments, though they might have been convincing enough to the old Dominican friar, Antonio Minasi, who thrice saw the Fata Morgana in the Straits of Messina, or to

Sir David Brewster, they totally failed to assure Tattooed Tom, old Probart our carpenter, Jack Burnet the cook, and others, that it was merely a natural phenomenon, to be accounted for through some form of dioptrical refraction, by means of which a ship sailing on one part of the ocean might be reflected on *another*, or, as we had just seen, even on the land itself.

"I assure you, my lads," he continued, "she was the representation of a vessel now under sail elsewhere. You all saw that the sea and bay were calm as glass, that the ship was braced sharp to the wind, with her port tacks aboard, while we had none, not even a catspaw on the water or a leaf stirring on shore. You saw that she careened, as if beneath its influence, and rose and fell as if running through a heavy sea. You saw the cabin lights go out, and the flying-jib hoisted. Thus it was quite evident that by something indescribable in the state of the atmosphere, her form and motions were taken up elsewhere, and mirrored *here*."

"I don't understand all this fine talk," said Tom Lambourne, sulkily, "and I don't care if I never do. I aint a scholar, but a hardworking foremastman, that has seen every land under the sun. So by your leave, or without it, we shall make the long-boat ready for sea. Come, my lads; we shall fill the watercasks at the spring yonder, and get

what remains in the bread bags, with all the other stuff we've collected, aboard."

"Hurrah !" cried the crew, "hurrah for blue water !"

"Get the mast stepped, and all the gear ready , we'll be at sea in an hour, or my name aint Tattooed Tom Lambourne."

"Rodney," said Hislop, turning to me, bitterly, "Goethe says that painting and tattooing are natural symptoms—the savage hankering after the brute—and faith, I begin to think so."

Old Tom Lambourne only half understood the remark ; but it stung him deeply.

"I don't deserve this at your hands, Master Hislop," said he ; "and it aint manly to upbraid a poor fellow with his misfortunes when shipwrecked among savages, and I tell you so—for all your book-learning," he added, bitterly.

"You are right, Tom, and I am wrong. Pardon me, old shipmate," said Hislop, as they shook hands.

So thoroughly were our companions scared by the recent spectral appearance, which they connected in some way with the dreadful character of Antonio el Cubano, that they at once commenced with alacrity the preparations for putting to sea.

It may be that somewhat of the professional restlessness of sailors confirmed their resolution.

They were already tired of their sojourn on the island, and inspired by the desire of reaching Tristan da Cunha, which is inhabited by about eighty families of Portuguese, English, and mulattoes, among whom Hislop assured them they might linger long enough before they were taken off by a passing ship—quite as long as if they remained on the Isle of Alphonso—and where, for subsistence, they would be forced to work as day labourers in the savannahs and on the highways.

As for the Island of Diego Alvarez, our Scotch mate, who seemed to know everything, assured them that it produced only moss and sea-grass, and that if cast there they would die of starvation. Moreover, without chart or compass, how could they hope to steer with certainty in any direction?

They might all perish in detail by the most dreadful deaths in their open boat, gasping with unquenched thirst under the blaze of a tropical sun. He said much more; but they would listen to nothing save their own fears and restless impulses.

I, too, was weary of the island; and though feeling all the despondency that follows a severe disappointment on the disappearance of the illusory ship, I in no way shared the wild and ill-regulated wishes of the crew, though assured that I would be compelled to follow their desperate fortunes.

Hislop made a last effort to convince them that

all they had seen was only the reflection of a real object produced by natural causes, such as the dead calm that prevailed upon the sea—the moon shining from a point where its incident ray formed an angle of 45° on the water—the influence of saline and other effluvia suspended in the air, producing, as in a catoptric theatre, a vision by reflection ; but finding that they heeded all this no more than the wind, he fairly lost his temper, and bade them “go and be hanged for stupid dolts.”

It was perfectly natural that all this should sound strange to unlettered seamen ; so they continued their preparations with all speed and in silence, for they all loved Hislop, and were loth to offend him.

Two bags of bread which still remained, the kegs of rum, and four casks newly filled with fresh water, were put on board the long-boat, together with all our arduously collected store of kids' flesh, boars' hams, and sea-fowls' eggs.

The oars, boat-tackle, and blankets were also shipped, and the whole crew embarked at the mangrove creek, where the boat lay.

Hislop and I still lingered ; so we were told peremptorily that if we did not come on board at once, they would shove off without us. Thus compelled, we stepped in most reluctantly and seated ourselves in the stern, and he assumed the tiller. The oars were run through the rowlocks, and Lam-

bourne was about to shove off, when Probart, who had the bow-oar, suddenly remembered that he had left his hatchet near our wigwam, and asked me to get it.

I jumped ashore, and was proceeding along the beach for it, when suddenly I was confronted by Antonio, who from a thicket had been watching our operations and departure.

His tawny skin—for he was naked to the waist—his ferocious aspect, his head of matted hair, his colossal strength, and atrocious character, were not without a due effect upon the boat's crew at this crisis.

"Shove off—shove off!" I heard several voices cry in the boat; "here comes that dog of a Cubano."

I struggled with Antonio; but he laughed loudly, and drew his pistol with the air of one who would enforce obedience; besides, his eyes, which the tangled masses of his hair overhung, were flashing with malignant fire, as all the slumbering devil was roused within him.

The whole crew saw this, and I perceived that Marc Hislop made an attempt to rise up and spring overboard to my succour; but as all their hopes of reaching Tristan da Cunha depended entirely upon his skill and knowledge of navigation, he was seized by Warren, Chute, and others, roughly

thrust down in the stern sheets, and forcibly held there.

I saw now that the fear and selfishness of the rest prevailed over all that Hislop, Lambourne, and Carlton could urge ; for amid a storm of contending tongues, I perceived the oars dipping in the water again and again, and flashing like silver blades in the moonlight as they were feathered ; and the long-boat, with all my companions, shot from the creek into the bay, and bore away to seaward about two in the morning, leaving me on the beach alone—*marooned* with the fiendish Cubano !

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A NEW DANGER.

HAD not Antonio held me fast and menaced me with his pistol, I would have sprung into the water, and undeterred by the sharks that were for ever gliding stealthily about in the bay, would have swam after the boat ; for desperate though the fortune of those who were there, I would rather have shared it than live on the island of Alphonso with such a companion.

His fierce mocking laugh grated harshly in my ear, but I heeded him not, and continued to gaze after the boat and the lessening forms of those who had abandoned me, not without a fond and desperate hope that they would return for me. Every moment I expected to see her put about ; but no ! she held steadily on, till hull, and sail, and crew were blended into one little dark spot, which ere long could scarcely be discerned on the moonlit morning sea.

Her course was trimmed north-east, for where

they supposed the isle of Tristan da Cunha lay. She had caught a breeze, and before four o'clock in the morning the last vestige of her had disappeared.

Still I did not entirely despair !

When day dawned, while my eyes were almost blinded by tears of rage and bitterness, I clambered in haste to the summit of the great bluff, and gazed eagerly to seaward, in the hope that the arguments or wishes of Hislop, of Carlton, and of blunt old Tom Lambourne *might have prevailed*, and that I should see her returning ; but alas ! there was nothing visible save a lonely albatross skimming lazily between me and the rising sun.

Except for the sake of Marc Hislop and one or two others, who in our parting interview had acted as my friends, I hoped—but this was in the intense bitterness of my heart, at an abandonment so cruel—that the long-boat might swamp, founder, or perish, how I cared not.

What was to become of me now ?

The boat might fall in with some ship, and thus afford me a double chance of being taken off the island. But would the captain of this supposed ship bear up for the land if it lay far from his course ?

Amid these perplexing thoughts and surmises, my greatest source of annoyance was the odious companionship of the Cubano.

I felt neither hunger nor sleep, though all the preceding night I had never closed an eye ; but now I remained upon the bluff, gazing on the sunlit sea, from under the shadow of a broad-leaved plantain, until I was roused in the afternoon by Antonio, who joined me.

"*Hola ! mio muchacho !*" (hallo ! my boy), he exclaimed ; "you promised me a dozen of biscuits if I released you from my hiding hole in yonder rock. Now, biscuits are biscuits here, so where are those for which I ransomed you ?"

"Gone in the boat with everything else," I replied, sulkily and sternly.

"What !—all ?"

"Everything."

"What shall we do when, my powder is done ?"

"I know not, and I care not."

"There are but ten charges left," said he, gloomily, as he opened the tin case.

"What is that to me ?" I asked, with growing anger.

"It is this much to you. that if provisions fall short I shall *eat you !*" he replied, with a fiendish grin, accompanied by an emphatic oath. "Now, my fine fellow, what do you think of *that ?*"

The words of the wretch, his herculean frame and ferocious aspect, which the wild life he had lately

spent among the woods of Alphonso had not improved, made me shudder.

On remembering the manner in which we first found him floating in the open boat at sea, the suspicions of Weston, Hislop, and Lambourne regarding the disappearance of a companion who had probably been with him — suspicions which all his future conduct seemed to confirm, and knowing all he was capable of committing, my heart sickened with disgust and apprehension ; but the imminence of my own danger made me dissemble.

While pretending to smile and to disbelieve him, I mentally considered how to arm myself, or how to deprive him of those weapons which, when added to his muscular strength and singularly brutal nature, rendered him an enemy so formidable.

The idea of swimming to one of the adjacent isles occurred to me ; but the straits between were full of foaming breakers and sharks ; the rocks, moreover, were inaccessible, and wherever I might go Antonio could easily follow.

I remembered the carpenter's little hatchet, which was still lying upon the beach, and resolved to possess myself of it, to conceal it about me, and to use it without mercy if occasion served or required.

"Did you hear me speak, you English heathen ?" shouted Antonio, striking me on the shoulder.

"Yes," said I, shuddering again ; for in addition

to the load of crime which covered Antonio, I loathed him as the primary cause of all our misfortunes, and of my present misery.

"*Bueno*—then look to it!" said he, nodding.

"Look to what?"

"We must take to kid-catching and boar-hunting, else I may feed myself, as I have done before, with whatever comes most readily to hand."

"Shall we not place a signal again on the mountain?"

"For what purpose?" he asked, with a grimace.

"To attract a passing ship."

"Of what shall we make it?"

"The studding-sail boom—where is it concealed?"

At the mention of the boom, the revengeful Cubano gnashed his teeth, and replied,

"I have cast it where man's hand shall never get it, into a chasm on the other side of the mountain; but *voto!* let us go down and repair the hut those *ladrones* have left, and you," he added, with a grin, "shall be my *camarada de casa*."

The sun was now setting beyond the sea, and the shadow of the great mountain was falling eastward over the island as we began to descend from the bluff, where I had lingered so long, by one of the narrow and winding tracks made through the gorse by the wild goats.

Hunger now assailed me, and saying I would

hasten forward and procure some bananas, I reached the beach before Antonio was half-way down the rocks, and found Probart's hatchet where—so unfortunately for me—he had left it in the hurry of embarkation.

I snatched it up, and as the handle was short, and the blade, though sharp, was small, I secured it in the waistband of my trousers, and buttoned my now tattered jacket over it, determined to prove therewith the hardness of Antonio's head on the first opportunity.

An emotion of security now filled my heart, as I felt that I had a weapon with which to strike at least *one* blow in defence of my life, if it was assailed.

CHAPTER XL.

THE REVOLVER AGAIN.

As it was alike dangerous and uncomfortable to sleep under the dews that descended after sunset, for two nights after the departure of the boat I was compelled to share the wigwam with Antonio, but did so with dread and loathing, and kept as far away from him as possible.

His dreams, which were full of oaths, ejaculations, and frequently cries of "*El aparicion! El espectro!*" came on him as of old; and as sleep to me became an impossibility, I resolved to leave him to his own devices. Certainly the island was large enough for us both.

Moreover, he had become so sparing of his ten charges of powder, that he would not fire a single shot at either bird, or goat, or wild boar. I have since believed that he saved them with the resolution of defending himself to the last, if Hislop ever returned to arrest him; and now, being lord and

master of the whole island, and of me too, he exhibited a new phase of character.

He became too lazy to procure food, and forced me to find it for him, under threats of shooting me. Thus for two days after the departure of the boat, being totally incapable of catching one of the fleet goats *alone*, and being in no way disposed to encounter singly one of the wild boars, I had to climb the steep rocks above the breakers to steal the sea-birds' eggs.

This feat I achieved with considerable peril, for the birds, when roused from their eyries, whooped, screamed, and wheeled in flocks and circles about me, flapping their huge wings ; so that once I became so bewildered, that instead of clambering again to the summit of the cliff, I began a descent towards the foaming sea below.

In re-ascending, my hat was blown away, and with it the wretched eggs for which I had risked my life and limbs.

After this event I resolved to procure food for myself alone, and instead of returning to Antonio, who usually loitered about the hut our men had left, I went to the opposite side of the island, and found a banana grove, wherein I took up my quarters.

The fruit, as it fell ripe from the trees formed my food, and of the broad leaves and some branches

I made a little gipsy-like hut, wherein I might sleep at night without being drenched by the baleful tropical dew ; for of it, and its subsequent fevers and ague, I had a great dread, for to become ill would ensure a death of hunger and thirst.

In that place, which resembled the lair of a wild animal, though I had no fear of the awful solitude around me, I lay awake for half the night, listening to the chafing of the surge and shedding many a bitter tear for my home and those who were there—those whom I might never see again—and longing, oh, how earnestly, how eagerly, and how prayerfully, for a passing ship !

Anon I would start up and rush forth to look about me and to listen, fearing that some craft might heave in sight on the other side of the isle, take off Antonio, and leave *me* !

Such a catastrophe would, I am assured, have driven me distracted.

In the wild life I led there, on the Island of Alphonso, it was strange how sharp, how keenly acute every sense became, but more especially those of touch and hearing.

I had been thirty-six hours without seeing my pleasant chum, the Cubano, or being near him with food. I knew that his rage would be great, and feeling myself unusually weak after all the mental excitement and bodily exposure I had undergone

necessity now compelled me to avoid him strictly, as I was totally incapable of contending with him in any way.

If he found me, to plead that I had lost my way or had missed him, in a space so small as our island, though wild and wooded, would scarcely prove an excuse.

Another dread haunted me, that if a ship of any nation, but more especially of Spain, hove in sight, Antonio, to provide for his own future safety, might deem it necessary to dispose of me for ever, lest I should accuse him of the many crimes he had committed.

Without the evidence of Hislop and others, such accusations, if made by me alone, would have no great weight ; but he might not think of that ; and, moreover, was no doubt a steady believer in the old buccaneer maxim, "that dead men tell no tales."

When searching for berries, about sunrise, on the western side of the isle, and while the sun, though up, was yet below the great mountain, and cast its shadow to the extreme horizon of the hazy morning sea, I encountered Antonio at last.

Stooping on my hands and knees, I was turning over the great leaves of some creeping plants that were unknown to me, in search of some wild berries, which, as I had seen the birds eat them, must, I

knew, be harmless, when a severe blow on the head almost stunned me.

On looking up, there stood Antonio bending over me, with a savage scowl on his face, and his pistol clubbed as if about to repeat the assault. His intentions were evidently hostile, as he placed a foot upon my hatchet, which lay near, and his left hand grasped his knife.

Every way I was totally at his mercy !

Hunger, apparently, had rendered him furious ; but feeling certain in a moment that timidity would do me no service, I started back and said in Spanish—

“ Villain ! for what have you dared to strike me ? ”

“ Dared,” he reiterated ; “ ha ! ha ! much daring there is about it.”

“ Yes, you dog of a picaro ! ”

“ For what reason did you desert me, you raterillo ? ”

“ Because I could scarcely procure food for myself, and still less for a lazy ruffian like you.”

“ Ha ! ha ! I told you what would happen when I wanted food,” said he, feeling the point of his knife.

My blood ran cold at these words, and I cast a longing eye upon my lost hatchet ; he saw the glance, and trampled upon the weapon with a mocking laugh.

"What *do* you mean, Cubano?" I asked, in an almost breathless voice.

"Simply this: that as self-preservation is the first law of nature, I am bound to kill you."

He had the revolver in his hand, and while he cast a glance at the caps on the breech, as if to see that they were all right, and sheathed his knife, I made a bound aside, and placed a banana-tree between us. The dastard fired, and the ball, as it whistled past, stripped off a piece of bark.

In the same manner I escaped a second shot, so Antonio, finding that his much-prized ammunition was likely to be expended fruitlessly, rushed forward to use his knife.

The tendril of a pumpkin caught his left foot; he fell heavily, and hurt himself severely. Then, darting past, I secured my hatchet, and rendered furious by all that had occurred, and by the imminent danger which menaced me, a light seemed to flash before my eyes, I trembled with rage, and felt as if endued by a supernatural strength. I was about to spring upon Antonio, with hands, feet, and teeth—to hew at him with the hatchet as I would have hewn at a tree—when a new object suddenly caught my eye.

It was a ship—but a ship ashore!

"Cubano," I exclaimed, in a husky voice, "look there!"

Antonio looked in the direction indicated, and pausing in his murderous intention, uttered a fierce laugh of satisfaction.

In the rocky channel which opened between the inaccessible island and ours, there lay the wave-beaten hull of a dismasted vessel, which must have been drifted in over-night, as it was certainly *not* there yesterday, and it was now jammed hard and fast upon a reef of rock that connected them.

This new object changed at once the terrible current of the Cubano's ideas. A grim smile passed over his olive countenance ; he shook back the elf-like masses of coal-black hair which, in Skye-terrier fashion, overhung his wild dark eyes, and sheathing his knife, said—

“Mio muchacho—come ; I was only joking. Yonder we shall find food, perhaps, and who knows what more ? Come, it is a bargain ; and if you don't desert me, I shall not molest you again.”

He proceeded at once towards the beach, and I was hungry enough, and perhaps reckless enough now, to be glad of a truce, and to follow him, in the hope of finding something eatable on board.

CHAPTER XLI.

A WATERLOGGED VESSEL.

DESCENDING the rocks, which were steep and rugged, we reached their base, where a dangerous and treacherous beach sloped abruptly down into the deep water. It was covered with frothy sea-weed, bright-coloured shells, strange-looking pieces of blubber, and decayed fish of many kinds.

Over some large misshapen rocks, which were covered by masses of barnacles and long tangles of sea-weed that waved in the water, but which adhered to the stone with the tenacity of steel bands, we reached—but not without considerable difficulty, and being partly immersed in the foam that boiled over the reef connecting the islands—the wreck that lay hard and fast upon it.

By her build she was evidently a new Spanish brig of somewhere about one hundred and fifty tons burden, and straight as an arrow in her sheer stroke, which had been painted yellow.

Her masts were gone by the board, and her bowsprit had been snapped off near the cap. Every vestige of the bulwarks had long since been torn away by the waves that had swept over her; and the skeleton row of her timber-heads, the windlass-bitts, and the booby-hatch, alone remained.

Her hull had been swept of everything else.

She had evidently been long tossing to and fro, perhaps for six months, exposed to wind and weather. Nearly every vestige of paint had long since been washed from her hull by the waves, or scorched from it by the sun.

Her copper was thickly encrusted with barnacles, and coated with long trailers of sea weed.

Singularly lonely, silent, and desolate she looked, as she lay on the reef, heeled over to starboard, with the bleached or washed ends of her shrouds and rattlins hanging from the dead-eyes over the side channel-boards in the water; and then, to add to the effect of the whole, three huge and lazy albatrosses, gorged with starfish and blubber, alighted on her taffrail, and flapped their dusky wings with a melancholy booming sound.

As we clambered on board by the ruins of the main-rigging, which hung pendent over the port-side, an exclamation of disgust escaped even Antonio when we saw the miserable remains of a poor human being, hanging by the wasted and bony legs, which

were jammed in the iron gear about the fore-channel ; it had, when in life, been lashed thereto, and now hung pendent, with the head, arms, and body immersed in the water ; and these relics had evidently been dragged about with the wreck exposed to the waves, the sun, the fish, and the sea-birds for many months.

Of the crew we saw no other traces, and their probable fate was left to gloomy conjecture.

Removing the booby-hatch, we descended into her cabin, and found it half full of water, amid which the débris of the lockers had been long washed to and fro. There were blankets and clothing, cushions and pillows, bottles, glasses, cigar-boxes, Spanish packs of cards having cudgels for clubs, *espados* for spades ; and there, too, were charts and books reduced to mere pulp by long immersion.

The skylight was gone ; but on the cabin-windows we still saw the dead-lights, as those ports or shutters are named which are usually shipped in rough weather to prevent high seas from breaking in.

The place had a chill feeling—a dreary and desolate aspect ; for many months the water had been washing there from bulkhead to bulkhead and from stem to stern.

With the aid of my hatchet we forced a passage into the bread-room, as the locker wherein bread or biscuit is usually kept is named. It was

entirely lined with tin, to exclude rats ; but this had failed to exclude water, for the bags of biscuit, which to us would have been more valuable than sacks of diamonds or doubloons, had all been reduced to mouldy pulp and paste long ago.

Antonio seemed in his element ; his eyes sparkled with a lurid glare ; his limbs appeared to dilate and strengthen as he hewed and hacked away at the panels and bulkheads in quest of food and plunder, so he soon forced his way through the fore and after holds, and, indeed, over all the wreck ; while the blows of the hatchet, and the sound of his voice, as he shouted and swore to himself, sounded hollow and strange in the hitherto long-abandoned ship.

A little examination proved her to be a Spanish brig, timber laden, principally with mahogany, and completely waterlogged. Thus she could never sink.

She was probably from the Bay of Honduras. We found several coils of Manilla rope on board, and some cocoa-nuts entire. She was oak-built, copper-fastened, and coppered to the bends.

"She had not made the land in her last voyage," said Antonio ; "and a storm must have overtaken and dismasted her at sea."

"How do you know this ?" I asked.

"Because one anchor—her best bower—still remains in the bow, and the cables have not been

bent, but are stowed in the tier below. Her working anchor and kedge have both gone, or been sent overboard to lighten her."

And then, as if he had wasted time enough, Antonio descended to renew the ransacking of the vessel; and ere long I heard him utter a shrill howl of delight.

He had discovered a square box, entirely filled with case-bottles of Jamaica rum! To one who, like him, had been so long deprived of his favourite stimulants, this discovery was more valuable than a gold mine.

I cannot say that I shared his delight in this matter, knowing well that the wretch would drink to excess, and then there would be greater reason than ever to dread his presence.

Our investigation had occupied almost the entire day, and it was about the time of sunset when Antonio found his prize. Knowing well the danger of getting ashore in the dusk along the ridge of the reef and up the weed-covered rocks of the island, I urged the Cubano to return at once, as I had a dislike of remaining all night in a waterlogged wreck, which any rise of the wind or sea might take off the coast again; but Antonio only mocked me, and was deaf to my advice.

He drank at least a pint of rum in a few minutes, and this prostrated his energies for the time; so,

leaving him half-seated in the water that washed and gurgled about the cabin, with his back propped against the after bulk-head, the spirit box placed between his legs, and a square case-bottle in each hand, I prepared to sheer off and get ashore ere worse came to pass.

All the plunder I brought away with me consisted of a book, which I found, half defaced by water, on a shelf, and a small sword, like a *couteau de chasse*, that hung on a hook in one of the cabin berths, and which, unseen by Antonio, I concealed in my trousers, as he had lost my hatchet somewhere in the fore-hold, and I had no other weapon with which to defend myself if attacked.

I had eaten nothing but half a cocoa-nut all day, and felt weak and giddy when lowering myself off the wreck by the main-chains.

In the tropics the sun sets rapidly, and already the reef was darkened by the shadows of the two islands between which it lay. Their rocks were black as marble ; but the sea, and all the surf between them, were white as milk by the reflection of the snowy clouds on which the rising moon was shining.

The whole scene of the silent and waterlogged wreck was solemn and impressive ; and a gloomy horror was added to it by the ghastly remains of the dead man, which hung and were washed to and

fro alongside, head downward, from the fore-channel—swaying with a gurgling sound, as if he was essaying to rise from the water.

Shudderingly I turned away, and wading through the surf, clambered over the piles of slippery and weedy boulders, to regain the higher portion of the Island of Alphonso.

As I ascended, the voice of Antonio, now somewhat cracked and wavering, reached me, as he put his head above the booby-hatch, and sung a Spanish ditty, one verse of which ran thus :—

“Companero, companero,
She is gone that ruled my heart !
Companero, companero,
That was sorrow’s deepest smart.
But companero, companero,
Here’s the bota, drink your fill ;
For companero, companero,
Wine’s the cure for every ill !”

At this point of his song he suddenly vanished. Probably his foot slipped, and if so, he would fall souse into the water, which flooded all the cabin and companion-way. If stunned by the fall, or stupified by the rum of which he had partaken so freely, he might lie there and drown.

But what was the fate of such a wretch to me ? If I returned on board, could I save him ? No ; it was more than probable that in his intoxication he would assail me, and I might perish by his

hand ; so leaving the Cubano to his fate, I continued my ascent, until I reached the banana thicket, where my little hiding-place lay. There I placed the sword I had found beside me, for security, and coiling myself up on my bed of dry leaves, strove to sleep, and dream of deliverance and of home. But the idea of Antonio perishing there in the wreck haunted me, and kept me long miserable and awake.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE OLD SPANISH BOOK.

NEXT morning my doubts about Antonio were dispelled, when, from my place of concealment (which was on the brow of a wooded rock), I heard him shouting for me ; and once or twice I obtained a glimpse of him, stumbling about as if intoxicated, with the box of case-bottles slung over his back in a Manilla rope.

How he had got either the box or himself ashore was a mystery, the passage along the reef, and the ascent from thence to the upper part of the island being so difficult and so dangerous ; but heedless of his invitations to join him, and of his threats for absenting myself, I remained close in my place of concealment, being well aware that if the Cubano was a hateful and perilous companion when sober, he would be doubly so in his present state.

The morning was clear and bright in all its tropical loveliness. My first glance was turned to

the sea, where its waters blended in the faintest blue with the flat horizon ; but no sail was in sight.

So long had this been the case—so often had I swept the sea at sunrise and at sunset with haggard eyes in vain,—that I repressed the usual sigh ; and placing the book I had found open in the sunshine, that its damp leaves might dry, I selected a ripe banana, brought some water in a large leaf from a spring, and proceeded to make my breakfast, like a hermit of old.

Concealed by thick shrubs and beds of gigantic tulips, I was certain that Antonio could neither discover nor molest me—at least, that he could not take me by surprise, which was somewhat consoling ; for the events of yesterday morning had given me a greater terror of him.

At my feet apparently lay the bay, on the margin of which stood the rude wigwam built by the men of the *Eugenie* ; and it made me think sadly of good Marc Hislop and others who were gone.

There lay the rocks which formed the horns of that beautiful bay, tufted with feathery trees, and between them extended the long white line of the coral reef, over which the shadowy vessel had appeared to sail on that eventful night.

On my right towered through the clouds the great mountain, which is yet unnamed ; and on

my left rose, sheer from the water, the mighty bluff we had first descried at sea.

I took up the book, the leaves of which the warm sunshine had dried and crisped, and its pages made me think of home and of that civilization from which I was exiled—of Eton and other times ; and for nearly an hour my eyes were full, my heart sick and heavy, with intense longing for relief, and a weariness of the life I was passing on this lonely island.

After a time I began to read, and in this new or old (it was both to me) sense of pleasure I forgot all my sorrow and peril.

It was a Spanish book, the title-page of which was gone, but proved to be the first volume of a collection of the voyages and discoveries made by the Spaniards in the olden time.

It related* the adventures of Alphonso de Albuquerque, detailing how he and Tristan da Cunha, each with seven caravels, had sailed from Europe and touched at Teneriffe, while there was an eruption from the crater of the great peak, during which a mighty mass of rock fell down and brought to light the great diamond, which had since shone at times with such wondrous brilliance in the night,

* I subsequently learned from Marc Hislop that the work was probably a volume of the *Collecion de los Viages y Descubrimientos de los Espanoles en Indias*.

but the exact locality of which baffled all search during day.

Sailing from thence to the isles named Tristan da Cunha, a storm dispersed the fleet ; but Alphonso, after being separated from Don Tristan, discovered the island, which he named from himself, and had his name cut on one of the rocks, in the year in which Philip, King of Castile and Emperor of Austria, died ; and this was the rock which we had discovered.

Then, in the following year, he sailed to India, of which he became viceroy, for Ferdinand the Catholic. It detailed how, thereafter, he went from the city of Cochin unto the Straits of Malacca, and sent a certain valiant Portuguese knight, named Ruy Nunnez da Cunha, as ambassador to the king of the Seguiers : how he sailed to Java, where he found the wonderful birds of paradise, that came in flights from the southern isles of India, and were fabled to be always on the wing without the power of alighting, till they found some that were drunk with the strength of the nutmeg, which always intoxicates them.

In that sea huge lampreys adhered to the keels of his caravels, and for a time retarded their progress, which was deemed to be enchantment.

Sailing thence, Alphonso discovered an island where the sea-serpent coiled up his monstrous length

for certain seasons, guarding caverns that were filled with piles of golden ingots, and casks of orient pearls, rubies, and diamonds ; and in this isle were deep bights and bays, where ships with all their crews lay spell-bound by necromancers.

On another island he found a white nation, whose cavaliers were arrayed in fine shirts, slashed doublets of taffeta, and trunk hose, with long swords and short mantles, exactly like the Portuguese ; and having money of silver, with many other incredible statements, all tending to assure the reader that this settlement was one of the seven Christian colonies that, under seven bishops, had fled from the Spanish Peninsula when the cross was trampled under the feet of the Moors, and when the churches of Christ were converted into mosques for the worship of Mohammed, as a punishment for the wickedness of Roderick the Last of the Goths.

Returning westward from this wonderful voyage, in 1513, Don Alphonso went from the city of Goa to the straits of Mecca, and passing with twenty caravels through the narrow Gate of Tears into the Red Sea, he bombarded the city of Aden, after which a cross appeared in heaven, shining before his ship, like the pillar of fire that shone before the children of Israel ; and two years after, this worthy cavalier, just as he was about to make Shah Ishmael, king of Persia, pay tribute to his master the king

of Castile, "passed away to the company of the saints," dying like a true Hidalgo, with his armour on and his toledo at his girdle.

The real and the marvellous were so curiously blended in these voyages, that I read on, forgetful of all about me, and charmed in spite of my deplorable situation.

At last I came to the history of a valiant mariner who invented a *steamship* in the time of Charles V —a narrative which seemed to illustrate the old aphorism, that there is nothing new under the sun.

When Charles the First of Spain and Fifth of Germany was emperor, there lived in the busy town of Barcelona, a certain Blasco de Garay, captain of a merchant ship.

In his youth Blasco had been one of the mariners of Columbus, whom he accompanied in all those voyages which gave to Castile and Leon a new realm beyond the seas of the southern and western world. He was with him when he landed in Guana Bay and erected the standard of Ferdinand and Isabella on a shore never before trod by a Christian foot ; so this land, which is one of the Bahamas, by the suggestion of Blasco, he named San Salvador ; and he was also with him at the discovery of Cuba, of Hispaniola, and the discovery of that mighty continent, the *nominal* honour of which was robbed

from Columbus by Amerigo Vespuccius the Florentine.

But all this was when Blasco was a boy ; so fifty-one years after, that is, in the year of grace 1543, he conceived the idea “of an engine able to move large vessels in calm weather without the use of oars or sails.”

So coldly were his proposals met at home, that he was on the point of applying to James V. of Scotland, a monarch then far in advance of any other in Europe, in the cultivation of the arts, of commerce, music, architecture, and painting ; but unfortunately he died of a broken heart, and, moreover, his mariners were the scourge of the shores of Portugal and Spain.

But Blasco did not lose heart, for after enduring torrents of ridicule, and experiencing incredible abuse, with threats from the Dominicans that they would burn him as a sorcerer, the Emperor agreed to permit a trial of his great invention, and it took place in presence of a mighty concourse, at Barcelona, on the 17th of June, 1543.

The harbour there is formed by a kind of bight, which lies between the citadel of Monjuich and the city ; all the shore of this bay was covered with spectators ; the battlements of the governor's palace, and those of the palaces of the counts of Barcelona and of the kings of Arragon, with the spire of

St. Mary-of-the-Sea, were also covered by a multitude.

The Emperor was on horseback, surrounded by his courtiers, the commanders of St. Jago, of Calatrava, of Alcantara, and other religious and military orders, wearing their crosses and mantles, and all the officials of his splendid household, while his guard of archers, the guards of Monteros de Espinosa, and the old German Lanzknechts, lined the beach with their great gilded partizans, the staves of which were covered with crimson velvet and tasselled with gold.

On beholding all these preparations, and such a concourse of the noble, the wealthy, and great around the Emperor, Blasco de Garay believed that the fortunate hour—"the hour which, according to the general saying, presents itself to every man *once* in his life for making fame and fortune, had *now* arrived."

He had spent the night in prayer, at Montserrat, for the success of his invention—dreamt of in youth, studied in manhood, and now matured in age—the ship that would be alike independent of wave and wind.

Montserrat is a few miles from Barcelona, and had then a famous abbey, which was much frequented in consequence of a miraculous image of the Virgin, which was kept in a chapel on the

summit of a rock ; and in this chapel ninety lamps of solid silver, filled with perfumed oil, burned night and day, and on each was engraved the name and arms of Alphonso de Albuquerque, who brought them from the mosques of the East, beyond the realms of Prester John. In the caverns beneath dwelt many aged hermits and others who wished to seclude themselves from the world ; so there did Blasco de Garay spend the night preceding the 17th of June, in meditation and prayer for the success of his wonderful scheme.

A vessel of two hundred tons, named *La Trinidad*, commanded by captain Pedro de Scarza, was then passing the high bar which is formed at the entrance of the bay by the waters of the Bezos and the Llobregat mingling with the sea ; and when she caught the eye of the Emperor, he ordered Blasco to try his experiment on *her*.

She was laden with corn, and had just come from Monte Colibre, or the Columbretes islets, which lie near the coast of Valencia, and poor Pedro de Scarza, in his ignorance and fear of what was about to be done to his ship, rent his beard and tore his slashed doublet as he stamped about her deck and gave himself up for lost, when ordered to furl everything aloft, as *La Trinidad* was to sail without canvas, or as he believed, about to be bewitched.

Blasco told his secret to none ; but it was ob-

served that he placed across the vessel's deck, and bolted thereto, an axle, at each end of which was a large wooden wheel. Amidships were several other mysterious wheels with bands and bars, and a necromantic-looking iron boiler of great size, which he filled, however, with water from the holy well of Montserrat.

The moment this water attained boiling heat, by means of a fire which burned in a grating underneath, the wheels revolved, and again Pedro de Scarza rent his beard, while most of his crew jumped overboard ; for now the vessel ran right across the Bay of Barcelona *against* the wind which was blowing fresh, to the great astonishment and terror of the people.

Charles V., whose mind was more occupied by wars and conquests, by battles and sieges, than the arts of science and peace, ordered his treasurer to inspect this strange machine and report upon it.

The treasurer, in doing so, got his trunk breeches torn by a portion of the machinery, by which accident about three pecks (Spanish) of fine cedar sawdust, which formed the bombasting thereof, were spilled on the deck of *La Trinidad*; so being a solemn, proud, and pompous grandee of Old Castile, he justly considered himself insulted by a vile mechanical contrivance, which he loudly denounced, stating "that it was not worth adopting, as the vessel

did not go more than eight miles in two hours, which any caravel might do ; and that the boiler was a Satanic affair, which was liable to burst and scald good Christians."

The Emperor, who was on the eve of departing from Spain to invade France, thus forbade Blasco to think more of his invention ; but he bestowed upon him forty thousand maravedis, and created him a knight of the Dove of Castile—an order instituted in 1379, by Henry II., King of Castile and Lord of Biscay—the same who was poisoned by a handsome pair of buskins sent to him by Mohammed II., the Red-faced king of Granada.

But Blasco de Garay, on seeing no further hope of success with his long-cherished steam-engine, in the bitterness of his heart dashed it to pieces with a hammer, thus destroying in an instant all that the fond hopes, the deep thoughts, and the labour of a lifetime had developed and constructed.

Disgusted with the world and weary of it, he retired to one of the little hermitages in the Rock of Montserrat, only in time to prevent the Inquisition from burning him as a sorcerer, and there he died, in the year of the Emperor's abdication, 1555.

CHAPTER XLIII.

SANGRE POR SANGRE.

SEATED under a banana-tree, with my back resting against its trunk, I had read thus far ; and lulled by the ceaseless hum of insects among the leaves, and by the equally monotonous chafing of the sea on the beach far down below, I permitted the book, so valuable under the circumstances in which I was placed, to drop from my hands, and I was about to sleep, when the appearance of a distant object on the waters gave me a species of electric shock.

A SHIP !

Under a cloud of canvas, she was running direct for the island from the west, and must have been some hours visible before she caught my eye.

I started up as if I would have met her half way, and then seated myself again, and watched her in a species of ecstasy.

Ah ! how my heart leaped at this sight ! My emotions were suffocating, and with them there was a nervous fear that it might prove another

optical delusion—another *Fata Morgana*—another ship that would melt away on a nearer approach.

But no! On she came—on and on, with the white foam curling under her sharp bows, a long wake weltering under the counter and running far astern, everything set upon her that would draw, from deck to trucks; even her studding-sails were rigged out from the lower, the topsail, and top-gallant yards.

She seemed a very large vessel, ship-rigged, and apparently about fifteen miles distant.

How I dreaded that she might change her course! How I longed for some means of attracting her, ere evening came on. How I panted. I rose, and in an incredibly short space reached the summit of the great bluff which overhangs the sea.

There, under a blazing sun, I exhausted myself by waving my tattered jacket, and by shouting as if her crew could have heard me.

Then I felt my brain almost boiling in the heat, and sat down in the shade of a thicket to fan myself with a large leaf, and lave water from a spring upon my face and head.

Forgetting all about Antonio, or what his views or purposes might now be, I descended to the beach, and stood upon the white stripe of sand, in the hope that some one on board who might be using a telescope would distinguish me; and about two

hours after she came in sight I supposed this was the case, for when the wind veered more upon her quarter, I saw her ensign floating as it was run up to the gaff peak ; but my eyes failed to make out its colour or nation.

And now her hull became black and all her canvas assumed a purple hue as the sun set ; but her sails grew white again when the shadow of the mountain fell across the sea she sailed on.

She was about three miles off when the wind became light, and ere long almost died away. I felt as if bursting with impatience—with excited hope, with joy to behold her, and with desire for deliverance. All this created a delirium in my head and heart, like intoxication or fever.

During the day I had seen nothing of Antonio, whom I supposed to be either on board the wreck, or employed with his beloved case of Jamaica rum in some thicket on the other side of the island. Indeed I forgot all about him, and thought only of the approaching ship.

I felt certain that I had been seen ; why else would she have shown her colours ?

The sunset was followed by a deep and solemn crimson, which overspread the western quarter of the sky and sea. The line of the horizon could no longer be distinguished, so softly did cloud and water blend together in the distance

In the dark blue vault above, the diamond stars were sparkling. No sound met the ear but the gurgle of a spring from a rock plashing on the pebbled channel, and the ceaseless chafing of the sea upon the lonely shore.

The passing breeze stirred the pendant leaves of the palms, and then died away, for it came in puffs that caused the canvas of the coming ship to shiver aloft; so ere long her courses were brailed up, as they collapsed against the masts.

Slowly and imperceptibly the large and stately craft came on. There was a trim squareness in her hamper aloft, and a clean, flush run in her hull that gave her somewhat the aspect of a man-o'-war; but she was not one, evidently.

Nearer and nearer she came. The look-out ahead evidently saw the bar or coral reef, with the ridge of white foam that boiled at the entrance of the bay, for now a leadsman was busy in the forechains to leeward.

Anon her cloud of canvas, topsails, topgallant-sails, and royals, seemed to tower between me and the sky. I could see every sail and rope distinctly, and could count the men upon her deck.

Now her royals were hauled down, and the foreyards slewed round as her head was thrown in the wind; then the rushing sound of the great chain cable, as it roared hoarsely through the iron hawse-

pipe, reached my ear over the ripples within the bay, as she came to anchor outside the reef; and I saw her crew swarming up aloft, and laying out upon the yards to hand her canvas, and in a few minutes she was bared of everything.

I panted with eagerness for the next movement in the drama of my deliverance, and laughed exultingly when one of her quarter boats was lowered and manned.

For a time it hung off the larboard quarter, as the great ship swung round at her moorings, and the bow-man held on to the mizen channels by a boat-hook, while the men kept their oars up-ended.

During this delay, I endured an agony of impatience. At last a smart fellow slid down the falls to the stern sheets, seated himself, seized the tiller rope, and the oars dipped in the water as she was shoved off with her bow pointed to the shore.

They were pulling for a part of the beach where a ledge of rock formed a kind of natural pier within the northern horn of the bay, and I was about to run in that direction, when the voice of Antonio, rendered husky by his recent potations, reached me.

“Hola! Stop, or it may be the worse for you,” said he.

I turned, and saw him start from behind some large boulders which lay on the beach to my right.

There he had evidently been lurking and observing the ship's approach ; and now he stood, with bare knife in hand, between me and the coming boat.

The pile of weedy boulders concealed us both at that moment from the ship and from those in her boat ; and by the light of the moon I could read the fell intention of Antonio in his dark and deep-set eye.

In tangled masses, his black hair fell over a low and narrow brow, and met the equally black whiskers that mingled with the beard which grew like a furze-bush over his chin and cheeks. Naked to the waist, he resembled in every way a brawny savage. Inflamed by alcohol, the expression of his eye was terrible, and he seemed to tremble with the ferocity of his emotions as he grasped his knife, with the thumb of his right hand placed firmly over the pommel.

The moonlight shone brightly on the beach ; so whatever he meant to do, he resolved should be done behind the screen formed by the boulders among which he had been concealed.

I had still the sword which had been taken from the wreck, and I drew it with the resolution of defending my life to the last. Antonio started on beholding me armed so unexpectedly.

"You see the boat which is making for the shore?" said he.

"I do, and am on my way to meet it ; so stand aside, Cubano," I replied, firmly.

"And you will tell her crew of all that happened in the *Eugenie*, and cry *sangre por sangre !*" said he, grinding his teeth.

"That is as may be," said I, without consideration.

Then uttering a howl like a wild animal, he rushed upon me with his knife uplifted ; but quite undaunted I met him half-way, and thrust the sword under his right arm-pit. Springing back before the great lumbering ruffian could renew the attack, I gave him another dangerous wound in the breast, which tumbled him down on his face ; and without looking to see whether or not he moved again, I ran along the moonlit beach, and reached the boat, which had just sheered alongside the ledge of rock already mentioned.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE SAN ILDEFONSO.

THE bowman held the boat's-head to the shore by the hook, which he grasped with his left hand, while stretching out his right to me. 'Twas old Tom Lambourne; there was no mistaking that quaint and tattooed visage of his!

"Hilloah, Master Rodney, here we are again, come back for you, after all!" he exclaimed, joyfully.

"Tom, Tom!" I gasped, while seizing his hard brown hand, and leaping, without invitation, into the boat, where my hands were immediately grasped by Hislop, who had been steering. "Oh, Hislop, Marc Hislop!" I added, in a breathless voice, and nearly sank down overcome by emotion.

"You didn't think *I* would leave you there, my boy, if I could help it?" said he. "Thank heaven, we have come in time. I have counted every day, every hour, aye, every moment, and have scarcely ever slept for thinking of you, and the wretched condition in which you were left."

I could not reply, but, completely overcome by the revulsion of feeling, seated myself in the stern-sheets, and wept.

"What is this in your hand?" said Hislop, with astonishment; "a sword, and blood on it too! Where did it,—where did this come from?"

"Antonio,"—I began.

"The villanous Cubano?"

"Yes," my voice sank into a whisper, I was so weak.

"What of him?—where is he?"

"He tried to kill me when he saw the boat approaching, and—and——"

"What then?"

"I ran him through the body."

"But where is he now?" continued Hislop. "Our work in rescuing you will be but half done if we cave him unhanged."

"He is lying wounded, dying, perhaps, on the beach. Oh, Hislop, it is horrible! For pity's sake, for heaven's sake, go some of you—behind those rocks," I added, incoherently, for in my joy at escaping I felt it possible even to compassionate and forgive Antonio.

"Remain here," said Hislop, and leaping ashore, followed by Tom Lambourne, he went at once to the place I indicated.

I now looked at the boat's crew, eight in number,

and to my surprise found they were all Spaniards ; bearded, mustachioed, and armed with sheath-knives in their sashes ; some wore red nets on their heads, others red nightcaps, and they might all have passed—especially those with earrings—for blood relations of the Cubano.

I had scarcely made this unpleasant discovery when Hislop and Lambourne appeared, half supporting and half dragging Antonio towards the boat, into the bow of which they thrust him with very little ceremony ; and there he lay in a heap, as it were, with his eyes closed and his bare and hairy chest covered with blood and sand.

His right hand still clenched his Albacete* knife, that weapon with which he had committed so many crimes ; so Hislop tore it from him, and cast it into the sea.

He moaned heavily, and the Spanish oarsmen looked at each other, and then at me, with eyes the reverse of friendly in expression ; but now Hislop seated himself, assumed the tiller-lines, and said, in their own language—

“Shove off for the ship, marineros. We must have the wounds of this picaro looked to at once ; so give way with a will.”

* Albacete is a town of Murcia, where the cutlers manufacture a great number of sheath-knives.

The boat's head fell round, her stern lay to the beach of that detested island of Alphonso, and the sturdy *Espanoles*, with their bare feet planted firmly on the stretchers, bent their backs at every stroke, and made the boat fly through the moonlit bay towards the ship, which lay more than a mile distant outside the coral-reef.

In a few minutes I related to Hislop how my time had been spent since his departure, and how I had feared that the desperate sequel of to-night would assuredly ensue when Antonio found a ship off the island.

"He will dangle from the yard-arm now, if ever a rascally pirate swung there!" said Hislop, through his clenched teeth.

After my loneliness on the island, I cannot describe how pleasant his voice—the voice of a valued and trusted friend—sounded in my ear!

He told me that the boat's crew soon repented of their selfishness and folly in leaving the island, and next day would have returned, but they had lost all idea of its bearings, and being without compass or chart, were compelled to run in what they believed to be the direction of Tristan da Cunha.

A sea half swamped the boat, and washing away the tarpaulin which covered the bread-bags, soaked and destroyed their contents; yet, having no other food, they were compelled to eat these salt-sodden

biscuits, and thus their thirst became excited to agony, as they were under a vertical sun, and their supply of fresh water was rapidly consumed.

For six days and nights they endured unspeakable misery ; and just when they were sucking the last putrid drops from the barrel-staves, a large vessel hove in sight, running due west, under a cloud of canvas. She saw their signal, bore down, and picked them up.

She proved to be the *San Ildefonso*, a Spanish merchant-ship of sixteen hundred tons, bound from Java to Cadiz, with a mixed crew of Spaniards and Lascars, and with a few cabin passengers ; in all about sixty souls.

Her skipper, the Captain José Estremera was very unwilling to add to the number of his crew, lest provisions should run short, and flatly refused at first to haul up for the island, and take me off.

For two days he resisted all the entreaties of Hislop and others, till the former found one ally in a Portuguese friar, who was returning from his mission in Java, and another in a wealthy Dutch passenger.

Fra Anselmo held the terrors of Pandemonium before the Capitano, and the Dutch planter held a handful of guilders, so the yards were trimmed anew, the charts were consulted carefully, and in two days more the look-out man in the fore-cross-

trees of the *San Ildefonso* sighted the great mountain of the island.

Hislop had many doubts whether he would find me alive, fearing that I might perish of hunger, of despair, or by the hand of the Cubano.

Just as he concluded his narrative, I found myself under the towering side of the Spanish merchant-ship.

She had a long flush deck ; was pierced for and carried twelve brass nine-pounders, and had top-gallant bulwarks aft. Over these and along her side was a row of faces, surveying us in the moonlight with expressions of wonder and interest.

I sprang up the rope-ladder, and on reaching the deck my hands were caught and shaken by Ned Carlton, old Probart, Burnet the cook, Boy Bill, and others of our crew, who all expressed in various fashions, but chiefly by swearing at themselves, their contrition for having so selfishly abandoned me ; but that was all over now, and I desired them to forget it.

Antonio was next hoisted on board. His appearance and his wounds excited great astonishment ; and now, surrounded by a crowd of dark and grim-looking Spanish seamen, and darker leathery-visaged Lascars, we were conducted aft to the quarter-deck, where Captain José Estremera awaited us, together with a number of passengers, whose curiosity was excited by the whole affair.

CHAPTER XLV.

WE SAIL FOR EUROPE.

ESTREMER was a smart little Andalusian, with large whiskers, which he curled with great care, and he wore his black hair shorn short. He had little gold rings in his ears, and the red point of a cigarito perpetually gleamed between his teeth. He wore a broad-brimmed straw-hat, from which a scarlet ribbon floated, and he was entirely clad in a spotless suit of white linen—jacket, waistcoat, and trousers. The ample collar of a shirt that was broadly striped with red and white was folded over his shoulders. He was about to speak, when Antonio, who was supported by two of the crew, suddenly exclaimed to one of them—

“Benito Ojeda—hah ! Don’t you remember me, Benito ?”

“What, Antonio, is this you ?” replied the seaman ;
“the best Cubano that ever sailed past the Morro light.”

"Do you know this man, Benito?" asked the captain.

"Right well, senor, and will bear witness to his character," replied the sailor, bluntly.

"Much value your evidence will be," said Estremera, contemptuously, "when you are known to be the greatest picaroon on board. Come, *esta senor*," he added to me, "you are welcome."

"*Muchos gratias*, *senor capitano*," replied I, bowing low, as I stepped forward.

"But what in the name of mischief am I to do to provision you all?" said Estremera, with perplexity.

"After what I have endured, *senor capitano*, a very little food will suffice for me."

"Were you ever in Spain?"

"No, *senor*."

"How, then ——"

"Oh! one may speak Spanish without having been in Spain," said I, smiling.

"Of course—of course. But what is this?" he added, on perceiving the wounds of Antonio; "Caramba! have you been fighting—killing one another?"

"*Senor*," said Hislop, "this is the picaroon of whom I told you—he who slew our captain and shipmates, and whom we thrust overboard; but who, as if by a miracle, reached the island of Alphonso before us."

“Bueno ! And what more ?”

“On seeing your ship come to anchor outside the reef,” said I, with some anxiety for the issue of the affair, “he endeavoured to kill me ; and but for the sword with which I was armed, he had assuredly done so.”

“To kill you—santos !—and why ?”

“Lest I should accuse him of those crimes which he had committed in the *Eugenie*, and which so many of her surviving crew, now here on board, are ready to substantiate.”

“And now in the name of justice, *senor capitano*, I demand that he be strung up at once at the fore-yard-arm !” said Hislop.

“Demonio ! I have neither the power nor the will to do that, before all these accusations have been inquired into and proved ; and there is no chance of our meeting with a Spanish ship of war in these seas,” replied the captain.

There was a pause, during which José Estremera scratched his right ear with an air of perplexity ; and the aspect of Antonio, as he drooped between his friend, Benito Ojeda, and another seaman, was truly ghastly in the moonlight.

“Take that man below, and have his wounds looked to,” said Captain Estremera to some of the crew. “Senor Hislop, I wish to speak with you alone on these matters ; and meanwhile, Senor el

‘Gobernador,’ he added, to the Dutch gentleman, “will excuse us.”

He and Marc Hislop now retired aft to the taffrail, over which they leant and conversed, while the most of the crew went below with Antonio, who would no doubt give them *his* version of the story ; while I remained near the binnacle, anxiously waiting the result of this conference, and watching the changing features of the fertile shore, the curved bay, the foam-covered coral reef, and every thicket with which I was so familiar—the palms, the chesnuts, and bananas—as the great Spanish merchantman swung slowly round at her anchor, when the soft night wind veered from east to south.

Silence soon reigned fore and aft, for there were none on deck but some of the passengers, smoking over the taffrail, the anchor-watch amid ships, and some of the *Eugenie’s* men loitering about the fore-castle-bitts, that they might have an opportunity of speaking with me before turning in.

It would appear that, being loath to add to the number of his crew, who were a mixed and somewhat mutinous band of Spaniards, Cuban creoles, and lascars, and having still a long voyage before him, he offered to rid us of Antonio, and supply us with muskets and ammunition, some medicines and cooking utensils, some old sails and spars wherewith to erect a comfortable hut, and to leave us all on

the island of Alphonso, to the chance of being taken off by the next passing ship, which very possibly might be a British one.

My heart died within me on hearing this strange and most unexpected proposal.

"How would you rid us of Antonio, senor?" asked Hislop, gravely; "do you mean by hanging him?"

"Oh no!—by taking him with me to Spain."

"For what purpose?"

"To have him tried before the regidores at Cadiz."

"While all the witnesses are left behind?" resumed the Scotchman, with surprise.

"Demonio—that is true!" said the captain, scratching his ear again, for a partiality to his countryman was evident, and a little use of the knife is not deemed a *very* heinous crime in the land of Don Quixote.

"You can all work?" said he, in another tone.

"All—all can hand, reef, and steer."

"Bueno—one English sailor is worth a dozen lascars; so, were it not for breaking an agreement, I would maroon them all ashore there. Hanging your Cubano might be very useful, to terrify some of my crew who are very discontented; but I have not the authority to do so—and the greater is the pity, as I shall have to feed him, and there is no use

in feeding up a fellow merely to hang him. Caramba ! there is nothing for it but keeping you all until we reach Teneriffe ;—I shall be compelled to run into Palma or Santa Cruz for fresh water, at all events ; and when there, I shall leave the whole affair in the hands of Senor the Captain-General of the Canaries.”

“ And meanwhile the Cubano ——”

“ Shall be put in the bilboes in the cable-tier, as he must be too dangerous a picaroon to leave afloat among a ship’s company like mine.”

A berth was prepared for Hislop and me in the steerage, while the rest of our shipmates were berthed among the Spaniards and dirty Lascars, neither of whom were much to their liking.

Food and wine were immediately provided for me. I partook of them greedily, and believe that, but for the new strength they gave me, I should have sunk altogether.

Old Tom Lambourne, Ned Carlton, and Probart, the carpenter, now rejoined me, and expressed great discontent that Antonio was not “run up at once,” adding the satisfaction with which they would all have “walked aft with the line, had he been at the other end of it,” and prophesying evil to the ship and her crew if he was kept aboard.

“ But what is the captain to do ?” asked Probart ;

"'tain't no use attempting to kill that Cubano—he is either Davy Jones or the Devil!"

"Or Whirlwind Tom, as puts maggots into the midshipmen's nuts," said Lambourne, "and makes a sound ship leak, nobody knows how or why; sours the burgoo forward and the wine aft; makes many a poor fellow lose his hold when laying out on the yard-arm in a dark night, and works all manner o' mischief aboard."

"If he ain't Whirlwind Tom, out and out," added Probart, solemnly, and with increasing energy, as if by describing their own fears they wished to apologize for their desertion of me; "if he ain't Whirlwind Tom, I say he's something as bad, and I wish I was clear o' this here craft, before he works us all a mischief."

"I think he's the ghost of some old buccaneer that's been hung at Port Royal, or marooned on the Albuquerque Keys long ago," said Lambourne. "He has already found an old shipmate aboard, and may I never see the Nore again if they wont be up to something sly before long: for that fellow has sin enough on his soul to sink a seventy-four!"

The *San Ildefonso* was a beautiful ship, and very man-o'-war like in her general aspect.

Her decks were clean and spotless. Every rope was tidily belayed and coiled away in its place, and the brass mountings of her binnacle lamps, of

her wheel and capstan, were all polished till, like the twelve brass nines she carried, they shone with the brightness of burnished gold.

She was thoroughly Spanish, though—for all the food on board, even to the cabin biscuits, had the flavour of garlic; and everything else, even to the red and yellow flag at the gaff peak, was redolent of Havannah cigars.

Her cargo was valuable, and consisted of the most choice productions of Java, such as sugar, coffee, pepper, indigo, and tobacco, with spices of all kinds.

Among her cabin passengers she had the Dutch Governor of Surabaya, a province of Java, which is bounded on the north by the sea of that name, and on the east by the Straits of Madura. He was a retired soldier, and latterly had been a planter, and was now returning home to Holland with a vast quantity of luggage, in which, as Hislop informed me, according to the rumour current about the fore-castle, an almost fabulous amount of guilders was packed in canvas bags.

“And with a crew so mixed as ours,” he added, “it is the reverse of pleasant to have such constant whispering about it, when we have to run along the wildest portion of the west coast of Africa.”

For three days the *San Ildefonso* remained at anchor a few fathoms off the reef, while her crew

took everything of value from the water-logged brig that lay on the western shore.

Her iron cables and remaining anchor, her copper bolts, and a log or two of mahogany, with some coils of Manilla rope, were brought on board. The poor fellow whose bones were hanging at the fore-channel found a Christian grave, for he was buried near the rock which had the Spanish legend carved on it; and there Fra Anselmo, the Portuguese missionary, performed the funeral service of his church; and solemnly for the unknown dead the prayer seemed to go up to Heaven from that lonely islet in the South Atlantic.

Then, to my joy, the boats were hoisted on board—the topsails were cast loose, and preparations made for leaving Alphonso.

The windlass was manned, and I saw Marc Hislop with the rest, handspike in hand, heaving short on the anchor, in his anxiety to get under weigh.

“Heave, my lads—*heave and rally!*” I heard him shout, as if he had an English crew under his orders, and wished them to work briskly.

The anchor was soon tripped, and the head-yards were filled as she payed off; but too slowly for Hislop’s sailor eyes, for he shouted again in English, which he was safe to use—

“Sheet home, you lubbers! Oh, Rodney, how

slow these jack-Spaniards are! I would rather have one of our own sort than a hundred of them. Never mind—all's one for that! I'll have my foot on a deck of good British oak ere long. Now the canvas fills—she's under weigh at last, and walks through the water like a brave and handsome craft as she is!"

Now the island of Alphonso began to recede; the tall trees lessened to shrubs; the great bluffs to little tufted rocks, while the arms of that old familiar bay seemed to close and blend with the shore, as we bore away to the northward before a fresh, fair southern breeze.

Though I detested the island and all its features, yet I could not but watch them with interest, for it was a shore I should never *see* again.

The evening was lovely, and the blue waves of the ocean rolled in shining ripples which seemed to flow along with us.

Hislop and I stood on the forecastle leaning over the lee bow, and watching the white foam bubbling under her fore-foot, as the sharp cutwater cleft the sea, till the rising spray began to sparkle about the catheads; then the brine-dripping anchors were fished up to the gunwale and finally hoisted on board.

Fresher came the breeze, and now, as the studding-sail booms were rigged out to port and starboard,

the ship flew through an ocean crimsoned by the setting sun, and I heard Hislop, as he sat on the bowsprit, singing in the lightness of his heart—

Gaily we go o'er the salt blue seas,
And the waves break white before us ;
Our canvas aloft swells out in the breeze ;
And *home* points the pennant o'er us.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE HOMEWARD VOYAGE.

My heart beat happily ; I was no longer a lonely maroon, but on the high road to home and Old England.

We had several days of the finest tropical weather, and they passed unmarked by a greater incident than seeing a shoal of dolphins, sparkling as they surged through the brine ; the silvery flying-fish leap from one green watery slope to another, while the dark crooked fin of the stealthy shark glided as usual in the trough of the sea between ; a piece of weedy drift-wood with mother Cary's chickens or albatrosses floating near it, or perhaps at the horizon the topsails of a vessel hull-down, appearing for a time like white or dusky specks, according to the position of the sun.

The captain of the *San Ildefonso* perceiving that Marc Hislop and I were great friends kindly placed us in the same watch.

As for Antonio the Cubano, we never went near him if we could avoid it. He was placed in the

cable tier, and for more complete security, in the bilboes, which are iron shackles that confine the feet. However, we daily heard from the surgeon, and from Fra Anselmo, who was somewhat skilled in surgery, and who undertook his cure bodily and mentally, that the wound under the right arm-pit had proved slight, though the lung had escaped narrowly, but that the other in the breast had penetrated the fleshy portion of the heart, and was a very dangerous one. The friar added, "that the Cubano was not one of those men who are easily killed, and thus he would recover rapidly."

We also heard that Antonio was well cared for, as he had discovered one or two friends among the crew, such as the seaman Benito Ojeda, a most villainous-looking, beetle-browed, and squat little Catalonian, who seemed to be the worst character on board, and was engaged in perpetual quarrels.

"As we approach land," said the friar, "it will be necessary to have both these fellows well watched."

"Why?" asked Captain Estremera.

"Lest they plot an escape, or mischief for some of their companeros de viage."

Hislop gave me a quick glance as the old Portuguese padre said this; for of all the persons on board *we* had the most reason to dread this fettered fiend getting his hands and feet loose again.

Thus, in our berth in the steerage, I was frequently haunted by visions of wreck and danger—of sharks opening their jaws to devour me—of being thrown overboard—of being again marooned on that wild and lonely island, where no sound of life met the ear save the chafing of the waves upon the shore, the hum of insects, and the rustle of the falling leaves in the solitary woods.

But chiefly Antonio was ever before me, like a tormenting spirit, or the monster-man of “Frankenstein.”

I was ever engaged in fighting with him, or escaping from him; and so strong was this idea, that I always kept by my side at night the sword with which I had wounded him when he attempted to cut me off before reaching Hislop’s boat.

Then I would lie awake for hours thinking of the home to which the ship was bearing me, but which I might be fated never to see, and watching from my berth the square patch of blue and star-studded sky through the open hatchway, listening the while to the hum of the wind through the mizen rigging, the pattering of the long rows of reef-points on the sails, and at times, when looking up, I could see the little round trucks that seemed to pierce the starry welkin. Then when about to drop asleep, I would start to instant wakefulness, lest the feet of some one coming down the ladder

close by, might be those of Antonio—of the assassin escaped from the bilboes !

One evening Hislop and I were in the second dog-watch ; we had just had our coffee below with the captain, the old Dutch Governor of Surabaya, Fra Anselmo, and other passengers, and had come on deck as four bells struck.

There was merely wind enough to keep the canvas full aloft, and not a cloud was in the sky. The sea around us had a strange tint like apple green, that paled off into faint blue at the horizon, and the stately Spanish ship, when the wind came in puffs upon the beam, careened gracefully under her cloud of canvas, between us and the sky, as we walked to and fro aft the mainmast.

Seated under an awning which was rigged above the topgallant bulwarks aft, the passengers were enjoying their cigars, the men were all in groups about the deck forward, knotting, splicing, and conversing. A gang of the copper-coloured Lascars were squatted on their hams near the hawse-hole in the weather bow, all smoking one hubble-bubble, which was made of a large cocoa-nut, and which they passed from one dingy moustachioed mouth to another in the most free-and-easy way imaginable.

Each wore a dirty turban or fez ; their blue tunics and brick-red trousers were girt at the waist by a tattered sash, in which the deadly and double-edged

Malay kreese was stuck ; and this costume gave them an aspect as picturesque as the swarthy groups of muscular Spanish seamen, in their brightly-striped linen shirts, and with their heads furnished with Barcelona handkerchiefs, long scarlet caps, or twine nets to confine the masses of their coal-black hair.

Suddenly there was a shout forward, and we found that the squat little sailor, Benito Ojeda, when engaged in raising the foretopmast-staysail out of the bowsprit netting, in which it is usually stowed, had fallen overboard. Three sharks which had been following the vessel for a week past would soon have sealed his fate, but fortunately he caught hold of one of the martingale back ropes, and holding on desperately, swung above the spray that boiled under the bows.

Hislop skilfully caught him in the bight of a rope, and he was hauled in hand over hand, heels foremost, looking alternately as white as a sheet and as red as a boiled lobster.

"I don't think you've done the ship much service, master Hislop, in fishing that ere customer aboard again," said Tom Lambourne, in a low voice.

"Why so, Tom ?" asked the mate.

"Because he's the chum of that ugly Cubanny ; and a down-headed dog he is, that is always skulking fore-and-aft when off duty, whispering to

one, twisting cigarittys with another, and brewing mischief among the whole crew."

Hislop looked round at the squat and forbidding little *Espanol*, whose head, shoulders, and general bulk were so great, that he looked like a big man cut off by the knees ; but Benito turned sullenly away, and without a word of thanks to his preserver joined a gang who were hoisting the flying jib.

By the association of ideas, this sail made Hislop and me think of the spectral ship we had seen when on the island of Alphonso, and which had so terrified our men.

"I have not a doubt," said he, "that it was but the shadow of this vessel—the *San Ildefonso*—we saw on that night. The captain permitted me to examine the ship's log, and I found that at the same hour she was running *upon* a wind, and close hauled ; that her cabin lamp was broken by an accident, that the watch on deck had just shaken out her jib, and by some accident let the jib-sheet fly, and that the mate ordered the spanker to be hauled *more* aft, that she might answer her helm better. Could we have stronger proofs of what I then asserted, that what we saw was but the dioptrical refraction of a vessel under canvas elsewhere ?"

"It was a startling episode," said I, though his meaning was not very clear to me ; "thus we need not be surprised that foremast-men like Tom Lam-

bourne and others will maintain to the end of their days that it was the Flying Dutchman they saw, and nothing else !”

“Very likely ; but according to tradition, Vanderdecken is seldom seen in these seas,” replied Hislop, laughing ; “he is always cruising in Table Bay, or knocking about in the seas off the Cape of Good Hope, as any old salt will readily tell you. He may generally be known by his carrying a press of sail, royals, sky-scrapers, and everything, when other craft can scarcely carry steering canvas or double-reefed courses ; and he always sends off a boat with letters for Amsterdam, addressed to people who have been in their graves for two hundred years or more. Some of these letters are addressed to William II., Prince of Orange (father of our William III.), who died in 1660, and are offering him five thousand guilders, and as many Indian mohurs, payable at the bank of Amsterdam, if he will grant them a pardon.”

“For what ?” I asked.

“Crimes committed on board. Other letters are addressed by the crew to their relations, in places that no longer exist, such as the Haarlem gate and Cinghel-street ; and these letters are alike dangerous to take or refuse.”

“Why ?”

“Because they bring mischief if left on board

and if refused a typhoon comes on and sinks you."

"He is a pleasant craft to be overhauled by, certainly!"

"No one knows the origin of the legend," said Hislop; "some say she was a Dutch Indiaman, returning laden with great wealth, when her voyage was arrested by dreadful acts of piracy and murder which were committed by her crew. To punish them, Heaven sent on board a pestilence, which reduced them to a small number of wasted and worn spectres, who sailed from port to port offering all their ill-gotten gold as the price of rest, of shelter, of prayers for their sinful souls, and burial for their shrunken bodies; but they can *never die*; and thus from every haven and harbour, from every shore and town, their dreadful aspect, and the unexplained plague which devoured, without destroying them, even as the vulture preyed upon the vitals of Prometheus without their being consumed, always procured their expulsion, till finding they were shunned by all the world, they were compelled at last to cruise off Table Bay, the scene of their crimes, where their spectre ship, always the precursor of a storm, must haunt that sea until the day of doom; as Scott has it,

"—— that phantom ship, whose form
Shoots like a meteor through the storm,

When the dark scud comes driving hard,
And lowered is every topsail yard,
And canvas wove in earthly looms
No more to brave the storm presumes ;
THEN, 'mid the war of sea and sky,
Top and top-gallant hoisted high,
Full spread and crowded every sail,
The Dæmon Frigate braves the gale ;
And well the doomed spectators know
The harbinger of wreck and woe !"

"I have often thought," continued Hislop, whose memory was singularly retentive, "that the story may have originated in the queer old nautical idea of a *downhill current*, by which any kind of craft that doubled Cape Bojadore on the western coast of Africa could never return ; for such was the fixed idea of all mariners prior to the voyage of Bartolomeo Diaz, in 1486, and the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope. For this downhill current was supposed to run south *from* the equator ; and hence ships, however close-hauled, might beat and tack against it in vain ; for an adverse wind blew for ever in the same direction, till their spars rotted, their sails were frittered into rags, and their rigging wasted away—till their seams gaped and opened, and they sank into the sea, a worn-out wreck."

With conversations such as these, combining amusement with instruction, this intelligent young sailor was wont to beguile our watches,

while the *San Ildefonso*. sped on her homeward track.

We recrossed the line, and each successive morning I hailed the sun with fresh pleasure, as we drew nearer the latitude of Europe ; but we could still sniff the hot wind that came from the deserts of Africa ; and ere long the more experienced eyes on board began to discover to the eastward a *blink* in the sky, as that peculiar appearance of the atmosphere which indicates the locality of land is named by seamen.

CHAPTER XLVIL

A MUTINY.

FROM time to time Lambourne made Hislop and me rather uneasy by expressing suspicions of a collusion among the men forward.

The whispers of the treasure alleged to be in possession of the old ex-Governor of Surabaya, and the desire of Ojeda and one or two others to save Antonio from the punishment that would certainly overtake him if we reached Teneriffe, or signalled a Spanish ship of war, formed an unpleasant conjunction of ideas.

We, the survivors of the crew of the poor *Eugenie*, knew that if any revolt broke out among this mixed gang of dingy rascals, Spaniards, Creoles, and Lascars, our fate would be sealed. We were among the first who would assuredly be knocked on the head.

There must be great truth in the maxim, that "no human being ever came near another without influencing them for good or for evil."

On board the *San Ildefonso* it would seem that

Antonio found all the materials for evil ready to his hand, as more than half the crew were ragamuffins "engaged by the run," as the phrase is at sea. But the surmises of Lambourne were much too vague for us to give them any tangible form as yet ; and Antonio, our chief object of dread, was still secure in the bilboes in the cable-tier.

He had nearly recovered from his wounds. I saw him only once below, and in his impotent wrath he ground his teeth and spat at me like a baited polecat.

We saw nothing of the island of St. Mathew, so the next land we expected to sight would be the Isles off the Cape de Verd ; but the wind continued to blow freshly and steadily from the west, and as José Estremera made no allowance for current-sailing, the setting in of the sea carried us nearer the coast of Africa than was either necessary or desirable.

Thus one evening we heard the cry of "*Tierra !*" from the look-out man in the crow's-nest, and soon after a low blue and wavy streak on the lee-bow was declared to be the coast of Africa.

Though sea and sky were reddened by the setting sun, the rising coast wore a tint of the deepest indigo. It seemed rather flat and low ; but as we crept in shore, its features changed, and became more broken. Thickets of strange trees were dis-

cernible along the sea-margin, and then mountains rose in the distant background, with the sunset lingering in gold on their summits.

Night fell, and the ship's head was kept away a few points more to the west ; and when day broke we were all on deck betimes to greet the land.

We found the ship off Poison Island, which lies far northward of Sierra Leone, and adjoins the territory of the Felletahs. Many of the natives came off in their carved and painted canoes (which were propelled by paddles shaped like shovels), offering fruit, vegetables, and bananas for sale ; and these Africans would courageously shoot their light boats right across the forefoot of the ship while still under way.

At last the main-yard was backed for a few minutes, while José Estremera bought the entire contents of a large canoe for a few empty bottles, some iron rings, and the links of an old chain.

Some of these craft were rowed by Felletah women, and I could perceive that though deeply tanned by the sun, their faces were pleasant and oval their noses aquiline, and their hair black and glossy.

All these tawny rowers wore striped cloth tunics, which reached to their ankles, and had their necks and arms loaded with beads of glass or coral, and many of them had Spanish dollars attached to their carrings.

A gun was fired as a warning for all boats to keep off, lest some accident might ensue ; and it was amusing to see the consternation of the poor Felletahs, and with what speed they paddled away towards the shore.

Orders were now issued to lay the ship's head nearer the wind for the Cape de Verd, and to bend the cable to the working anchor, that it might be ready for any emergency ; and these directions had the unexpected effect of bringing matters to a crisis between our captain and the friends of Antonio.

They assembled in sullen groups about the deck, and clustered out upon the booms, where they muttered and whispered, and frequently pointed to the shore, and to the native boats that were paddling into the sandy coves and wooded creeks.

Tom Lambourne, whom Captain Estremera soon discovered to be one of the best seamen on board, had gone below with one or two more to rouse the cable out of the tier, when, to his surprise, he found the place filled with Spanish sailors and Lascars, all talking at once, and in full conference with the fettered Cubano !

He was roughly ordered to sheer off, and let the cable lie, while one or two drew their knives in a threatening manner.

"They are up to something at last !" said he to Carlton ; "so it is high time for the captain and

his cabin passengers to look out for a squall, or that old Dutchman's dollars may change hands at the capstan-head before night."

Hislop and I had dined with the captain, and were lingering over some wine of Alicante, fruit, and cigars, listening to a dispute about some very irrelevant matter between the old Governor of Surabaya and Fra Anselmo, when the ship's steward came to say that a sailor wished to speak with us in haste.

Tom was admitted, and bluntly stated at once his conviction that a plot had been laid by Antonio and others to seize the ship and run her ashore. If such were *not* their intentions, why had they refused to let him bend the cable to the working-anchor?

Hislop hurriedly repeated Tom's statement in Spanish, adding thereto his own ideas and suspicions on the subject.

The old priest and the rich Dutchman became seriously alarmed; while the olive visage of Captain Estremera grew dark as night with anger.

"Ave Maria!" said the priest, closing his snuff-box, and putting it hastily in his pocket.

At the same time the Dutch Governor started up to look for his sword.

"Seize my ship!—A mutiny!—What can their object be?" stammered the captain.

"With some," replied Hislop, "merely to have a

buccaneering ramble ashore among the Felletahs—with others, to marry and settle for a time ; but with all, to have a scene of plunder and devastation, to aid in the escape of Antonio, and to murder his English shipmates.”

At first the captain was inclined to doubt the whole affair ; but a strange noise was now heard in the fore-part of the ship, and Manuel Gautier, the chief mate, came hurriedly down to report that some of the men had taken the iron balls from the shot-rack at the main-hatchway, and were rolling them about the deck ; and that when he remonstrated with Benito Ojeda, there was a rush made aft, with cries of “Throw him overboard !”

On hearing this sudden confirmation of Tom's statement, Estremera started from the table, and buckled on a cutlass that hung on the after-bulk-head ; and then, with the brevity but characteristic taciturnity of a Spaniard, he proceeded to act with promptitude and determination, and instantly breaking open a case of ball-cartridges, began to distribute them.

“If so be there is a breeze on board, I'll make that Antonio dance Old Nick's hornpipe before it is over !” said Tom Lambourne, angrily.

“Fortunately, all the ship's muskets are below, I believe ?” remarked Hislop.

“Si, senor. Twenty stand are on a rack in the

steerage," replied Estremera. "Santos ! gentlemen, we must work hard. Get all those arms into the cabin and load them. We have not a moment to lose !"

"Run on deck, Tom ; they don't know that we are alarmed yet. Order all the *Eugenie's* men, all others you can depend on, aft. I fear ours are the only lads this poor Spanish skipper can rely on now !"

In less than *five* minutes we had all the muskets conveyed from the rack in the steerage into the cabin. We provided ourselves with ball-cartridges ; and then Hislop and I, with Manuel Gautier, the mate ; the old Dutch Governor, the captain, and even Fra Anselmo, in his long black soutan (quoting "that the end justified the means"), proceeded with all speed to load and cap the fire-arms.

Meanwhile, the rolling of the loose shot upon the deck overhead still continued, and to that noise was now added the halloing of the Spanish crew, and the screaming of the Lascars, as they proceeded together from one act of open insubordination and outrage to another.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

SEQUEL TO THE MUTINY.

THERE were on board the *San Ildefonso* ten survivors of the *Eugenie*, including myself ; and fortunately for the ship at this crisis, one of us, Francis Probart, the carpenter, was at the wheel, and remained steadily at his post during all that ensued ; for had the steering been relinquished for a moment, the vessel would have broached to, and her masts must have gone overboard.

The captain, with his three mates, his surgeon, and cabin passengers, and our men, made up twenty in all ; so we prepared at once for defensive operations.

The wild halloing increased with the thundering of the iron shot overhead, as they were bowled aft along the quarter-deck, smashing the grated stern seats, and rebounding against the taffrail, over which some of them tumbled into the sea.

“We’re all here, sir—Ned Carlton, Jack the

cook, Warren, Chute, and even boy Bill ; but we want arms," cried Tom Lambourne down the skylight.

"On deck, and at them !" said Hislop ; and we rushed up the cabin stair, supplied each with two loaded muskets to arm our friends above.

At this moment the ship was running with a fine breeze, which was pretty well aft. She had several studding-sails set ; and the extremely wide spread of her white canvas, which caught the sea-breeze one way, and the full yellow blaze of an African sunset the other, made me think—but the idea only flashed on me and was gone instantly—that *if* a tropical squall came on, while in contention with our own crew, our fate would soon be sealed by the elements.

She had everything set, even to little triangular scrapers, rigged to a skysail pole above her royals ; and all this cloud of canvas was glittering in the red and yellow light reflected from the sun and clouds.

But the evening was lovely ; the waves were in reality shining in liquid light on the western quarter of the ocean, as the sun, "blood-red," to use a hackneyed term, dipping down past a succession of straight and horizontal crimson bars, sank slowly beyond what appeared to be the flaming edge of a watery world.

But we had no time for poetry, or for surveying the scene around us. That which was about to ensue *within* the bulwarks of the *San Ildefonso* was impressive and terrible enough !

“Hand us the muskets, gentlemen,” said Ned Carlton, as we rushed up the companion ladder.

“Hurrah for the tools and the men to use them !” added Tom Lambourne, quoting some proverb, as the arms were promptly distributed ; and to the number of twenty we formed a line across the quarterdeck, a little way aft the mizenmast.

This was achieved just in time, for with loud yells of “Perros y ladrones !” (dogs and thieves !) “Muera José Estremera ! Mueran los Inglesos !” a gang of yellow-visaged Spaniards, armed with knives and handspikes, and yellower Lascars, with their terrible creeses, rushed aft in two parties, one on the weather side of the ship, and another on her lee ; but on being suddenly confronted by the levelled barrels of twenty muskets, they paused and wavered, though continuing to shout and brandish their weapons.

“Here goes for a shot at Antonio !” said Lambourne, taking a deliberate aim at that person ; but Fra Anselmo laid a hand on his arm, and besought him to pause.

“Don’t spoil him outright for hanging,” said Hislop ; “I would rather have him with a rope a

his neck, and all bearing a hand to run him up to the foreyard-arm, than shot dead like a sparrow."

"Come on," shouted our men ; "come on, muzzle to muzzle ! None of your lubberly stand-off work !"

"Fire at their legs and simply disable as many of them as possible, but spare life," said Fra Anselmo, in broken English.

"Fire at their heads, kill as many as possible, and spare *none*, though you should leave the ship unmanned !" said Estremera, in Spanish.

Lambert fired !

He missed ; and the ball, after shaving the side of the long-boat amidships, whistled into the sea far ahead, and Antonio uttered a fierce and derisive laugh, while the Lascars shrunk back with fear.

The enemy had not a single missile, for most fortunately all the loose shot for the ship's guns had been rolled aft, and lay in our rear.

While both parties paused, one irresolute to advance, the other to pour in their volley, I—being an old Eton bowler—resolved to make a wicket of the Cubano's legs. I took up a nine-pound shot, which lay with a score of others in the lee scuppers, and hurled it at him with all my strength.

He leaped aside nimbly and escaped, while the shot bowled harmlessly along the deck. He rushed after it, doubtless with the intention of returning it to me with compound interest ; but fortunately for

me, at that moment Hislop, who had lost all patience, and was no doubt smarting under the memory of his wounds, and of Antonio's past outrages, cried—

“Fire a volley and fall on them, my lads, with the butt-ends of your muskets!”

It might have been better policy, considering the superior number of the mutineers, for ten of us to have fired, and ten to have *reserved* their fire until the former reloaded; but Hislop's order was promptly responded to.

We all poured in a confused volley, and then rushed on in the smoke, with clubbed muskets and a hearty English cheer.

There was a brief struggle, during which our men laid about them mercilessly, and knocked over the Spaniards like nine-pins; while I encountered one active and wiry old villain, the *tindal* of the Lascars, who rushed on me with his *kreese* in his right hand, his body doubled, and his head bent down.

Charging him breast-high, the muzzle of my piece came crash upon the crown of his caput, which a scarlet fez failed to protect, and so I tumbled him against one of the brass nines to leeward.

On seeing this the whole of the *Lascars*, instead of coming to his rescue, fled down the fore-hatch way.

I gave the *tindal* another tap on the head to enforce quietness, and took away his creese.

"Help me to secure this rascal," cried I to our men; "he will be a surety for the other Lascars."

"I have him, sir, hard and fast, as if clenched in the dry nippers of a Jamaica land-crab," said Tom Lambourne; and in a few seconds he had the old copper-coloured rogue seized by the hands and feet to one of the aftmost guns.

Then we rushed forward to share in the scuffle, which was soon ended; for just as Antonio, on seeing the turn matters had taken by the force of our superior arms, was about to spring overboard, Hislop struck him senseless by a blow from the butt-end of his musket, and flung him, like a bale of wool, upon the top of the Lascars, who crowded about the bottom of the fore-hatchway ladder.

"Ha, porpoise-face!" said he, fiercely, "I have brought *you* up with a round turn at last!"

One or two Spaniards now fled up the fore-rigging, whence they implored us not to shoot them; but the squat *marinero*, Benito Ojeda, and all the rest, were driven down the fore-hatch, where they crowded at the foot of the ladder, treading the Lascars under foot, growling and menacing us with their knives and creeses, and threatening to set fire to the ship—a threat which they were quite capable of fulfilling.

On the deck lay one Lascar dead, and two Lascars and one Spaniard who were wounded in the legs. In his death agony the first had driven three inches of his sharp kreesse into the deck, when the blade broke off.

Probart was still at the wheel, steering the ship so steadily that not a cloth shivered aloft; but night was coming on, and as she was covered with canvas, to reduce it was necessary, but first the mutinous crew must be crushed. To Probart, as a spectator, the conflict must have presented an exciting scene: for, had we been beaten, *his* fate as an Englishman would soon have been sealed.

José Estremera, who had long been captain of a Spanish slaver, was inexorable!

"Manuel Gautier," cried he to the chief mate; "cast loose that gun in the weather-bow!"

Manuel, a smart and handsome young fellow, with the surgeon and two others, soon cast loose the lashings of the gun, and in a twinkling it was loaded, not with a round shot, but with some thirty or forty ball cartridges.

"Now, forward with it to the coaming of the hatchway," ordered the captain.

"But the bottom of the ship?" urged Gautier.

"Blow these rascals through it!" was the stern answer.

"Madre de Dios and all the saints keep us!"

implored Fra Anselmo, crossing himself; "senor, you do not mean to destroy them thus?"

"Yes—like rats, padre mio," replied the Spanish captain. "Depress the muzzle, hombres—up with the breech; clap a handspike under it, Gautier. Ready the fuse—a lucifer match or anything will do."

"Miserecordia—O miserecordia!" cried one fellow, looking up the hatchway with hands clasped, for the aspect of the round muzzle of the depressed cannon filled them all with terror, and made the miserable Lascars scream like children.

"Have mercy on us, senores!" howled the Spaniards in chorus, again and again.

"And what then?" asked Manuel Gautier, who was preparing a gun-match, as coolly as he might have made a paper cigarito.

"We shall return to our duty."

"Oh! no doubt, when we have got the weather gauge of you; but we mean to keep it, you cowardly piccaroon!" said Estremera. "Up yet with the breech of the gun—cover as many of the wretches as you can."

"For pity's sake, senor," said Fra Anselmo, laying one hand on the captain's arm and the other on the trunnion of the brass cannon:

On looking down the hatchway at that moment, my heart sickened when I beheld so many cowards

crouching in a cold sweat beneath ; so many uplifted hands ; so many olive faces, turning livid with terror ; so many dark and expressive eyes glaring upward to one point—the muzzle of the brass gun, which was to belch down death and mutilation among them ; but there too lay Antonio el Cubano, covered with blood, and gazing at us with something like the smile of a mocking fiend in his countenance.

“We are ready to surrender, senores,” said Benito Ojeda ; “so, if you fire, our blood be upon your heads, and on that of El Cubano, who lured us into mischief!”

Their united cries for mercy became so appalling, that, though they would have yielded no mercy to us had the circumstances of the case been reversed, Estremera consented to withdraw the cannon on three conditions :

First, that they would surrender everything they possessed in the shape of a weapon.

Second, that they would handcuff and deliver up all their ringleaders.

Third, that they would swear to be faithful to him and his mates for the remainder of the voyage.

To these offers they agreed, and about forty Albacete knives and creeses were thrown upon deck.

Hislop and I selected one or two as trophies of

our victory, but Manuel Gautier tossed all the rest overboard.

Ten pairs of handcuffs were then thrown down. On this a tremendous row ensued among the culprits, who were only quelled on seeing the muzzle of the brass nine appear again; and in a few minutes Antonio, Ojeda, and eight others were forced up the hatchway, and dragged aft to the quarter-deck.

The mutineers then came sullenly up, and the number of cuts and bruises about them showed how severely they had been handled.

On their knees before Fra Anselmo, the Spaniards made a solemn promise of peaceful and good behaviour for the future; as for the Lascars, it was deemed advisable to keep their tindal as a hostage for their conduct in time to come.

When I went aft I found him lying prostrate over the gun to which he was bound, incapable of speech, and literally foaming at the mouth with impotent rage.

Tom Lambourne laughed, and said—

“Master Rodney, always tie the hands of a Lascar, if you wish to make him hold his tongue.”

“Why?”

“Because they are like a Chinese; they can never speak when their hands are tied. They can only sputter and choke, like this old mountebank here.”

Those who returned to their duty received bandages, wadding, &c., for their cuts and bruises, and even a tot of wine each, in token of amity. The three wounded men were placed under the care of the surgeon, and the dead Lascar was buried by his countrymen, who cast him over to leeward, when a couple of sharks soon took care of him : for we saw a black crooked fin on one side, and the white belly of a second monster on the other, as he turned up open-mouthed.

Then the body vanished in a whirlpool, with a downward *jerk* that made our hearts shudder !

The prisoners were ropes-ended without mercy by Manuel Gautier and the other two mates ; they were also repeatedly drenched by buckets of salt water, and we stood by with cocked muskets until the whole—ten Spaniards and ere Lascar—were secured in the cable tier, where an armed sentinel watched them day and night during the remainder of the voyage, a duty that frequently came to my turn, as I was a kind of waister on board, and was seldom sent aloft.

So ended this exciting and most deplorable affair, which might have proved the destruction of the ship and of every well-disposed person on board.

The twilight was passing with tropical rapidity, and when all was over, the hands were sent aloft to reduce the canvas.

“Stand by the studdingsail-halyards,” shouted Manuel Gautier, in his own language. These sails were soon taken in, and the lower spars boom-ended alongside, while the royals and skysails were sent on deck, the loose shot were replaced in the rack round the coaming of the main-hatch, all loose ropes were tightly belayed or coiled away; and now as the freshening breeze came more and more aft, the stately Spanish merchant ship bade good-night to the shores of Poison Island, and bore away through the silent sea towards the Cape de Verd.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE COAST OF AFRICA.

ALL these scenes made a terrible impression upon me. It seemed now indeed that the boyish "dream of life was at an end, and that its *action* had begun."

The whole affair in all its details furnished ample scope for conversation in the cabin for some time after ; and too well we knew what our fate would have been but for the promptitude of Estremera, and the courage of Marc Hislop and his Englishmen.

To each of the latter, the Dutch Governor of Surabaya, grateful for his preservation from a cruel death, gave a gold doubloon, and José Estremera added five dollars per man.

To Hislop and me he presented each a pair of handsome brass-barrelled Spanish pistols, and from the governor we received each a valuable diamond ring ; but Marc was quite the lion of the cabin passengers during the remainder of the voyage.

Fra Anselmo was greatly surprised by the extent of his scholarship and varied knowledge, which far exceeded the acquirements of most young seamen; but Hislop, who was a modest fellow, considered them as quite a matter of course, education being so generally diffused in his country.

Among our men, when any point was in dispute, it was common to hear them say,

“Ask Master Hislop, he knows everything.”

“Of course he does,” added Tattooed Tom, one day; “blowed if I didn’t hear him beat that Portuguese friar all to nothing at talking in three different lingoes the other afternoon.”

“Indeed, Tom, I am very far from knowing everything,” answered Hislop; “I am only a hard-working seaman like yourself; but I have picked up some knowledge of different matters. You must know many a thing that I don’t know, for even the greatest men in the world can only learn a *part* of what *can* be known, and thus, at times, are as ignorant as those poor Lascars. But I have to thank my good mother at home in old Scotland for sparing nothing on me when a boy, and since then I have made myself—as any man, indeed, who has the will, may do.”

And it seemed to me that there was much sound sense in what the Scotchman said.

On the morning after the extinction of the

mutiny, we came to anchor a league to the northward of Warrang, for what reason I know not, unless it was that the wind blew hard and the land was on our lee.

It was my *trick* at the helm (as the two hours usually allotted to that duty are named), and when, for the purpose of stopping the ship's way and bringing her head to the wind, and making the canvas shake prior to furling up, Manuel Gautier sang out in Spanish,

"Timonero, luff and touch her!" I did not understand him, and nearly had the wheel twitched out of my hands.

The anchor was let go, and the great ship swung round with her head to the wind, which blew from the westward, and with her carved and painted stern to the green and wooded isle of Warrang, which is the most northerly of those that compose the archipelago of the Bissagos, a group of twenty little isles lying near the mouth of the Rio Grande, in West Africa.

Banks of mud and sand render all these isles dangerous on the seaward. With the exception of Warrang, they are all inhabited by a wild and robust race of savages called the Bijaguas, who are of great stature and are warlike and intrepid.

Though thirty miles in length, Warrang, with all

its fertility, is destitute of inhabitants, being totally without springs or water.

While at anchor, we saw a dark savage in a canoe floundering about in the apple-green shoal water that lay between us and the land. Without fear, he paddled close to the ship, and on signs being made that he might come on board, he moored his canoe under the mizen chains, and sprang up the side with ease and confidence.

He was a tall and powerfully made man, with features of the lowest African type, and close curly wool on his head, but without a vestige of clothing, unless a string of beads were to be considered as such, and a little paint like ochre in colour.

He pointed to the sea and then to his parched mouth, implying that he had been fishing, and was thirsty.

Some water was brought from the scuttle-butt; he drank of it greedily, and then patted his breast in token of gratitude.

The tattooing on Lambourne's face particularly attracted his attention, and seemed to excite his admiration; but poor Tom, with whom this unwished for decoration was a tender point, had no desire to fraternize with our sable visitor, and walking forward he leant against one of the windlass bitts and smoked his pipe sulkily.

The Bijagua now offered us his fish, which were

strung upon a green withe, and Estremera presented him in return a gaudy old muleteer's jacket, which being covered with brass buttons and red braid, would thus, he conceived, please the eye of a savage.

The Bijagua turned it round and viewed it in various ways, as if it puzzled him, upon which Hislop showed him how to put it on, and then attempted to persuade him to run his arms through the sleeves.

What idea occurred to the savage I know not ; whether he conceived himself insulted, or that his personal liberty was in danger, but uttering a yell, he overthrew both Hislop and Estremera, and springing down the ship's side with the agility of a monkey, reached his canoe, and in half a minute was clear of the *San Ildefonso* and paddling vigorously in-shore.

"This reminds me," said Hislop, when he had gathered himself up and regained his breath, "of an old voyager of whom I once read. About a hundred years ago, a Captain Weddel, who commanded the ship *Royal Charles*, was at anchor in Augustine Bay, off the coast of Madagascar, and there he insisted on clothing a savage in a complete suit of clothes, including a bob-wig and three cornered hat.

" 'They will keep you warm,' said the captain.

" 'But I am warm enough without them,' re-

plied the savage, writhing and perspiring in attire so unusual to him.

“‘They will defend your skin.’

“The savage laughed scornfully, saying,

“‘With my smallest arrow I can pierce them through and through.’

“He was in an agony of fear, and felt as if fettered with irons, and entreated so earnestly to be set on shore that his wish was granted. The moment his foot was on the land, with every expression of rage and fury, he was seen to cast his hat one way, the wig another. Then he rent the coat and shirt from his back, the breeches soon followed, and he spat and danced upon them, in mingled contempt for attire and joy that he was once more free. Our friend the Bijagua seems certainly to have shared his spirit and ideas.”

In the evening, on the wind veering round and becoming more southerly, we prepared again for sea, and Hislop was directed to weigh the anchor by *under-running* the cable in the long-boat, as the tide had ebbed and we were in exceedingly shallow water, which was covered with green and slimy stuff, probably the inland débris of the Rio Grande.

This mode of weighing our Scotch mate performed skilfully, by placing the chain cable over the davit-head of the boat, and underrunning it

till the anchor was apeak, when it was tripped by means of a buoy-rope.

There was a great length of cable out, for the water was so low that the ship could not have been hove to the anchor without danger.

"We'll make sailors of these Spanish lubbers before this voyage is over," I heard Lambourne say to Hislop as they scrambled on board, and then the boat was hoisted in.

The evening sun was burning hot, and shed a red glare upon the green slime of the shallow sea, till it seemed to swelter in its heat, emitting an oppressive miasma that would have been deadly had we lingered long there.

The strange trees that fringed the shore were seen to toss their great cabbage-like leaves on the rising wind ; but, as we speedily receded from the coast, they gradually lessened to the size of shrubs, and from shrubs to the size of little weeds, until they finally disappeared, when Warrang melted into the waves astern, as the *San Ildefonso* soon made a good offing and bore away to sea.

Our prisoners were now very effectually subdued.

More heavily ironed than the rest, Antonio sat ever silent and sullen, with his black-bearded chin sunk upon his breast ; and frequently when it came to my turn to be posted as sentinel over him and the others in the cable tier, I could see, by the dim

light of the horn lantern, which swung from the beam above (serving chiefly "to make the darkness visible), his keen, fierce eyes fixed on me with a rattlesnake glare, which seemed to say, if a glance of hate and spite could kill, he would slay me.

After he became used to having his hands fettered, the old tindal of the Lascars was by far the most lively and conversable of the dingy gang, who all sat in a row, with their feet locked in the iron bilboes.

One day I gave this old fellow some wine and water, when he was almost sinking amid the stifling atmosphere of the den in which he was confined.

His gratitude was unbounded, and in a burst of confidence—which brought upon him the maledictions of the rest—he informed me in broken English (of which he had picked up a smattering during a voyage in one of our old Indiamen), that had the mutiny been successful, every one of us would have been made to walk the plank to leeward, and then the ship was to have been run ashore in some convenient creek, dismasted there, to conceal her from the seaward, and then to be completely plundered;—on the whole, unfolding a strange and incomprehensible project.

When he concluded, I smiled significantly, and

tapped the butt of my loaded musket, as much as to say,

“It is all very well, old boy, but we weathered you fairly!”

As we approached the Cape de Verd, Estremera issued strict orders that no man was to sleep on deck at night, for fear of moon blindness—an ailment not uncommon in the tropics. An old voyager, Sir Richard Hawkins, relates that the moon’s rays off the African coast have a singularly pernicious effect upon the human body, and that “he knew a person who, sleeping one night in his cabin on the coast of Guinea, with the moon shining upon him, had such a violent pain burning in his shoulder, that for above twenty hours he was like a madman, and was not freed from it at last without a great many applications, and abundance of suffering;” though what this ailment was, would now greatly puzzle one to discover.

After a delightful run, on one of the last days of autumn we sighted the Cape de Verd and the Isle of Goree.

These rose on our starboard bow, rapidly and abruptly, for the ship was running before the wind at the rate of nine knots an hour, with all her studdingsails rigged out.

It was about dawn when land was first discovered from aloft, and by midday the Isle of

Goree bore about three miles off on our starboard beam.

The wind now fell light, and as the ship crept along we had a good opportunity for observing the coast by our telescopes.

Fra Anselmo, who had once resided there as a missionary, drew my attention to the sea of floating weeds, called the *sargasso*, through which we were sailing—weeds which are so brilliant and so green as to impart a peculiar hue to the water, and thereby gave the promontory its name—the Cape de *Verd*.

Along the shore we could see groves of the orange, the lemon, the pomegranate, and the citron tree, with their ripe golden fruit studding the green foliage like golden balls.

On the almost inaccessible isle of Goree, Fra Anselmo showed to us the old castle of St. Michael, which was built by the Dutch in 1617, and stormed forty-six years after by the English, under Admiral Holmes. In 1664 it was retaken by Adrian de Ruyter, after a little band of sixty British soldiers, under a Scotsman, named Sir George Abercrombie, made a defence so protracted and so resolute, that they only surrendered after the walls were battered to ruin, and all their ammunition was expended.

It was not without deep interest that we viewed these scenes and heard those forgotten fragments of

our past history, when so far from old England, and while sailing along a shore so wild and vast as Africa.

We used soundings while skirting the dangerous shoal known as Compan's Bank, *over* which it is alleged a famous buccaneer, named Nicholas Compan, sailed his galley ; and by sunset the Cape de Verd was far astern, and nothing but the blue sea around us again ; for now that wondrous shore receded eastward, far away towards the mouth of the Senegal.

CHAPTER L

SANTA CRUZ.

A FEW days after crossing the tropic of Cancer, on a lovely afternoon, we again saw the Peak of Teneriffe lighted up by the western sunshine, and rising like a cone of red flame from the blue sea.

The clouds seemed to rise with it, and ere long we saw its base spreading out beneath them.

"Tennyreef again!" I heard old Tom Lambourne muttering, as he leaned over the lee bow with a short pipe in his mouth; "Dash my wig! I have had a spell enough of Tennyreef before this!"

Manuel Gautier and Hislop now came with a party of seamen to get the anchors off the forecastle to her bows. This was no light task, the reader may be assured, for they were each about forty-five hundredweight; and now the ponderous cables rattled along the deck as they were bent to the iron rings.

We approached this singular island from a point

that was new to me ; but still its great and most familiar features were the same as when I first saw them from the deck of the *Eugenie*.

Estremera now reminded us that, when at Teneriffe, we should not fail to visit the two great sights of the island—the Valley of the Diamond and the old Dragon-tree of Caora.

The wind was fresh and fair, but fell light after sunset ; and when the high land of the Grand Canary was on our starboard beam, it almost died away. As we crept on we saw the lighthouse at the base of La Montana Roxo, sparkling like a star above the waves of the sea, which in the warm sunset seemed to have turned into blood or port-wine, so deeply crimson was the glow that lingered on the clouds and on the shore ; and then the vast peak—save where girdled in mid air by a light floating vapour—seemed all of a deep violet tint, dotted at its base by the white walls of houses, or of sugar-mills, and by groves of cocoa and rosewood trees.

Darkness was soon there, but still the sunset lingered in rays of fire upon the mighty Peak of Adam, on which the eye never tired of gazing.

By midnight we were abreast of it, and all was darkness at last, save where the millions of stars were sparkling in the wide blue dome of the sky.

Hislop and I were in the morning watch when the ship arrived off the mouth of the harbour of

Santa Cruz—that pretty town, which Humboldt termed the grand caravanseraï between Spain and the Indies.

A flash that broke upon the darkness, with a light puff of smoke floating away from the old castle walls, indicated the morning gun, and that dawn was visible.

It seemed as if it were but yesterday when the *Eugenie* and the Costa Rican brig had worked out of the same harbour together, in the same species of dull twilight, and that all which had passed since that time had been a dream.

We beat in with the breeze ahead. The light of another day was rapidly *descending* from the summit of the peak, and already that green girdle, named the Region of Laurels, was shining in the sunbeams; so ere long we saw the windows of the Custom-house, which stands above the long mole, and all the shaded lattices of the terraced streets of Santa Cruz, glittering in gold and purple sheen.

The anchors were ready to be let go; the chain-cables were ranged upon deck in long coils that ran fore and aft; we tacked repeatedly; and each time the tacks became shorter and more frequent.

“Ready about! Presto! down with the helm—let fly the head-sheets!” were the orders heard incessantly from Estremera and Manuel Gautier.

The yards slewed round sharply, and the canvas

flapped with a sound like the cracking of musketry ; at last, the anchor was let go about a half-mile from the shore in thirty fathoms water, and the ship swung round head to wind as her courses were brailed up, and the men hurried aloft to hand the topsails and topgallant-sails ; so she was soon denuded of her canvas.

When the anchor plunged into the frothy water, making a thousand concentric ripples run from the ship ; and when I felt, by the instant strain upon the cable, that she had firm hold of the ground, my heart swelled with unalloyed happiness ; for to be in Teneriffe was to be far on the watery high road to my home.

Santa Cruz, being the capital of these isles, is the residence of the Captain-General of the Canaries, the seat of the supreme court of law, and of all the consuls and commissaries of foreign powers, whose various flags, when displayed upon their houses, make the handsome streets as gay in aspect as the harbour, which is always crowded by the shipping of every nation.

A custom-house boat, with the Spanish ensign floating at the stern, came promptly off with an official, a dandified creole in uniform, with a sombrero on his curly head, a sabre at his side, and a cigar in his mouth. To him Captain Estremera made a full report of the mutiny which had broken out in

his ship when off the African coast, and the stern mode of its suppression.

Hence in two hours after, we had the satisfaction of seeing Antonio el Cubano, Benito Ojeda, the old tindal of the Lascars, and eight other rascals, taken off to the Castle of Santa Cruz, in a large open boat, guarded by twelve Spanish soldiers, in charge of a lieutenant, Don Luiz Pineda.

I can still recal the glance of impotent and baffled malignity that Antonio bestowed on us as he went down the ship's side. It combined all the worst emotions of his angry heart, and somewhat reminded me of his face in that terrible moment when he swung at the end of the studdingsail-boom, with despair in his clutch and death at his heart.

We watched the boat till it reached the long stone mole, and then we saw the fixed bayonets of the escort flashing, as the whole party ascended the great stair towards the custom-house, and surrounded by a mob of those nautical idlers who usually make a pier their lounge, disappear in the interior of the town, as they marched towards the castle.

Two episodes more will close the story of Antonio—his trial and punishment.

CHAPTER LI.

THE OLD DRAGON-TREE OF CAORA.

THE trial came on in a couple of days after, and proceeded with a celerity unknown in England or Scotland either. We were all examined, and previously were sworn, not on a Bible, but over two sword-blades held in the form of a cross—for such is the old chivalric custom in a Spanish court of law.

Without hesitation the judges found Antonio guilty : he was sentenced to die by the *garotte* ; and he heard his doom with apparent apathy.

The tindal of the Lascars was released, as it would appear that he had acted under compulsion ; but Benito Ojeda and eight other Spanish seamen were sentenced to work in the fortifications or on the highways for ten years, in chains, as felons or galley-slaves.

The trial over, Hislop and I gladly left the crowded hall of justice, and made our way through the streets of Santa Cruz, passing a mingled popu-

lation of yellow mulattoes, Spanish labourers, negro water-carriers, mercantile men, old ecclesiastics, and importunate beggars, till we reached our hotel, the windows of which faced the sea.

There we resolved to dine, and then ride over to Orotava, to see the wonderful tree which grows near it, taking care, however, to provide ourselves with rifles and ammunition for our protection ; as the adventures of Tom Lambourne and myself were too recent to be forgotten.

On our return we hoped to be able to visit the Valley of the famous Diamond, which was only visible in the night.

I have little more to relate now than what would seem more suitable to a traveller's commonplace book than the conclusion of adventures so wild as mine have been ; and so must hasten on.

At the posada in the main street of Santa Cruz we procured horses ; and leaving the fertile plain in which the little city stands, traversed a bleak and barren mountain-track for some leagues, until we reached the town of Orotava, or Caora, as it was named of old when the Dragon Tree was a sapling. It is built on the western side of the isle, and is both pretty and picturesque.

The mighty force of the Atlantic was breaking on the shore, in billows so vast, so white, so over-arching, and with a sound so thundering, that

they exceeded all we had ever heard before. The sky was becoming black to the north-west, and we could see the ships at anchor near Porto de la O getting under weigh, and shaking out their courses with all speed, to make a safe offing in case a squall came on.

Orotava, a pretty little town, clean and neatly built, stands upon the green slope of a beautiful hill, and faces the Atlantic. Ruins of sugar-mills and wine-presses were to be seen here and there among the corn and maize-fields, the vineyards and gardens ; for these remains, now almost covered by creepers and luxuriant plants, are the ruined fragments of the edifices destroyed by the great hurricane of 1826.

We reached an inn, gave our horses to the stable-boy, dined on a galina stewed with beans (and garlic of course) ; we had some native wine, and for a shilling might have had a sackful of pine-apples.

From the windows of the posada, as we sat at dinner, we watched the waves rolling in mountains of snowy foam, before the wind, in-shore ; and all the craft weighing or slipping their cables, and beating close-hauled under topsails and courses to attain good sea-room, lest they might be driven on the rocks. It was a lively sight, and a stirring one.

"Oh, for a fair wind when we sail again!" said I. "I would beg, borrow, or steal one, if I knew where such commodities were to be had."

"'Tis a pity you are not a subject of King Eric-with-the-Windy-Cap," replied Hislop, while making up a cigarito. "See how clumsily those lubbers sheer that brig to her anchor! Why the deuce don't they keep the current right ahead, and lessen the strain on the chain-cable? I shouldn't like to have my fingers between it and the hause-pipe just now. Why, she's forging broadside on!"

"Who was King Eric-with-the-Windy-Cap?" I asked.

"Did you ever read *Olaus Magnus*?"

"No; the name would seem enough for me. Moreover, we don't read Scotch poetry at Eton."

"He was one of the oldest annalists of Scandinavia, and you lose a deal in not reading him."

"Well, but this Eric——" I resumed.

"Was King of Sweden. He was surnamed *Waderhat*, and was deemed in his time a great sorcerer—so great, that he ranked second to none in that kind of craft. He was on the most familiar terms with all kinds of goblins and evil spirits, and constructed a peculiar cap, which by spells he endowed with such extraordinary power that the wind would blow from whichever way he chose to turn it. Our old Scotch fishermen in Orkney and

Shetland, who are half Norsemen, can spin yarns by the hour about King Eric Waderhat ; and it was by his aid, says Olaus, and thus being able to have always a fair wind, that the great pirate, Regner, King of Denmark, who was his nephew, carried the terror of his name to the uttermost parts of Europe. But now, Dick, as the bones of the galina are picked clean, as the wine is drunk, and the sun in the west, let us be off to see this famous old bit of arboriculture—the Dragon Tree of Caora. Ah ! that brig has got her anchor apeak at last ; the port-tacks are close aboard, and the jib hoisted, and—by George ! if her stupid fiddle-head is long in paying off she'll be foul of that polacca ! But here comes the *senor de casa*."

We asked the landlord, who entered at that moment, where the famous tree stood ; on which he politely offered to accompany us ; and certainly our visit was not time wasted.

In the garden of a *Senor Franqui* (whose father showed it to Humboldt), we saw this gigantic specimen of the many-headed palm, the aged *Dragor Tree* of Caora.

Its stem is forty-eight feet in diameter, and ascends like a solid pillar to the height of sixty feet, from whence an incredible number of strangely twisted and fantastic branches shoot off in every direction, but all bearing flowers and fruit.

"This, senores," said the hostalero, "is said by a learned traveller——"

"Aye," interrupted Hislop; "you mean Humboldt."

"Si, senor—to be the oldest tree in the world. Documents exist in the town of Santa Cruz which prove that in the fifteenth century—that is, when the Spaniards first came here under Don Alphonso, Ferdinand of Lugo, and others—it was just the size we see it now, and not a twig more or less."

"This is very likely, Dick," said Hislop in English, turning to me; "but for all that, it is *not* the oldest tree in the world. Europe and Asia are full of trees with doubtful or fabulous ages; but M. de Candolle, of Geneva, asserts that the most ancient tree in the world—one which was in full bloom when Our Saviour was born—is the old yew of Fortingall, at the mouth of Glenlyon, in Scotland. Well, senor," he resumed, in Spanish, "and this palm?"

"Alphonso de Lugo struck it thrice with his sword, in token that Tenerife and all the adjacent isles belonged to Ferdinand and Isabella, to Castile and to the Catholic Church."

"What wonders, and how many changes has the world seen since *then*! And this old tree is in bloom and bearing yet!" I exclaimed.

"I think," added Hislop, as we turned to leave the garden of Senor Franqui, "that Humboldt says

this species is very slow in growth ; and that the Dragon Tree required a thousand years to attain its present maturity."

"A thousand years !" I repeated, looking at it with that vague emotion of interest which is generally excited by the knowledge that we are looking on what we, in all probability, shall *never* see again.

It was near evening when we returned to the posada ; and after giving a "consideration" to the hostalero, who was a very pleasant and intelligent Spanish colonist from the old city of Jaen, in Andalusia, we mounted to return ; on which he said—

"Senores Inglesos, you should not leave Teneriffe without visiting the Valley of the Diamond."

"We had some thoughts of doing so," said Hislop ; "but is it far from this ?"

"About a league and half."

"Where away ?"

"Among the mountains, on the northern slope of the great peak."

"Ugh ! the scenery looks rather wild thereabout," replied Hislop ; "but 'twere a pity to leave without having a look at it, after all."

"You may remember, Marc," said I, "that this diamond is particularly mentioned in the old volume of voyages which I found in the waterlogged brig at Alphonso."

"Yes, to be sure I do," replied Hislop ; "and

that book, I think, must form part of *La Colleccion de Viages y Descubrimientos*. The diamond was first seen by Albuquerque and Tristan da Cunha, senior hostalero. I believe that it shines only in the night," said Marc, turning to the landlord.

"But then it beams like a star in heaven, senores," replied the Spaniard, crossing himself.

"You have seen it, then?" I asked.

"Oh! senior, a hundred times, and more."

"Is it supposed to be worth much?"

"From its light and size, many millions of duros."

"And yet it has been allowed to glitter away there for more than three hundred and fifty years!" I exclaimed, with incredulity.

"Because, senior, its exact locality can never be discovered, even by the most active searchers."

"Why?"

"On their approach it gradually fades, and finally disappears."

"But in daylight?"

"Not a trace of it can be found among the rocks, though a thousand men have searched for it a thousand times, till their fingers were worn and their hearts grew sick."

"Strange!" we exclaimed.

"Many an illustrious senior who has been captain-general of the Canaries for his Most Catholic Majesty has offered a thousand duros for its dis-

covery, and many a dog of a Jew has almost lost his senses in the rocky valley; others have nearly died of starvation rather than quit the search; but it always seems to melt away on being approached or as day dawns, so there are many who aver that it is no diamond at all."

"What then?" I inquired.

"An enchanted light," replied the hostalero.

Hislop seemed to ponder for a moment; then a bright smile spread over his jovial and sunburnt face, and he asked,

"Will this be a good night for seeing it, think you, senor hostalero?"

The innkeeper turned to the north-west, where the clouds were still banking up in heavy masses.

"Si, senor; I should say so."

"At what distance is this diamond visible, and from what spot?"

The Spaniard now gave us a knowing glance; his keen black eyes glittered, and he laughed aloud.

"Par todos santos, if *you*, senor, have any desire for getting it, you may find it easier to call down one of the blessed stars that are now beginning to twinkle in the heavens above us."

"Never mind what I wish; but say, where is it to be seen?"

"If you ride fast, senores, the light will yet

enable you to reach the valley," replied the hostalero, still smiling—almost grinning, in fact.

"Pursue the way from this to the eastward for nearly a league, passing on your left La Montanza de Centejo, and so on, till you reach a well, shaded by three old rosewood trees."

"What next?"

"Wheel off by a narrow path that lies to the right, and pass between two rocks; you will then see the summit of the great peak before you; and after proceeding about a mile, you will come to a flat stone, and from *there* you will perceive the diamond (if the atmosphere serves) shining like a light in the face of the rock, about fifty yards or so before you."

"Muchos gratios, senor," said Hislop; "these directions seem very clear."

"I am glad senor is pleased," replied the hostalero, removing his broad straw hat.

"Could you oblige me with a piece of hard chalk?"

"Hard chalk," reiterated the hostalero; "certainly, senor," and in a second he brought a piece from his kitchen.

Hislop thanked him, placed it in his pocket, and we rode off just as the clear twilight began to deepen with the most magnificent effects of lingering light and purple shadow on land and sea, on mountain, isle, and shore.

“What are you about to do with that piece of chalk?” asked I; “for assuredly there is something veiled under the request.”

“You shall soon learn—that is, if we see this real or enchanted diamond,” said Hislop, laughing.

“What do you mean?”

“That I shall put this diamond, if such indeed it is, into my old mother’s lap, when I go home to Scotland!” said he, with a boisterous laugh, in which I could not resist joining.

CHAPTER LII.

THE VALLEY OF THE DIAMOND.

WE rode due eastward by a narrow path that traversed mountains of rock, covered by wild laurels, rosewood trees, and vines. Far away on our left, wearing the deepest indigo tint, spread the ocean, the horizon line of which was distinctly seen against a sky of coppery red that appeared beneath the bank of squally clouds, which were fast dispersing now, or whirling upward into mid air and melting away.

In a valley on our left some lights were seen to glitter as if from the windows of houses.

"That is Montanza de Centejo, no doubt," said Hislop.

In a few minutes more we saw the three rosewood trees, and then the wayside well beneath the shadow of their branches. It was a simple and rude arch of stone, from a wooden duct in which the water flowed into a stone basin.

"Here is the fountain," said I; "and now our path to the right—"

"Lies through a gap in *these* rocks."

"An ugly place!"

"Is your rifle loaded, Dick?"

"Yes—and capped, too," said I.

Passing through a gorge in the piles of rock that rose on our right, we found ourselves in a large and rugged ravine, through which, under masses of creepers, there brawled a rough black mountain torrent, and by its side there wound a narrow path.

This ravine had been formed by that convulsion of nature which took place during the visit of Alphonso de Albuquerque and Tristan da Cunha, when the famous diamond was said to have first become visible.

The stupendous cone of the great Piton rose before us at the end of the ravine. In some places the latter was dark as blackest night could be, while the former, for some thousand feet of its height, below even the region of laurels, was bathed in a pure white flood of silver sheen, for a splendid moon had now arisen from the sea.

After proceeding with our horses at a walk for about a mile, looking carefully for the next landmark mentioned by the hostalero, Hislop drew up and dismounted, saying,

"Here it is, Dick."

I also dismounted, and found near the pathway a stone which had evidently once stood upright, but now it lay flat among the long grass and wild flowers that grew there.

Notwithstanding the gloom which yet enveloped us I could make out an inscription, partly by feeling with my fingers. It was deeply cut, and ran thus :—

"Aqui mataron a Juan Hererro. 1850."

"Here they slew John Smith," said Hislop, echoing, or rather, freely translating the legend.

"They—who were *they*?"

"Some robbers, no doubt; perhaps, like us, he came in search of the great diamond."

"Then is he buried here, think you?" asked I, instinctively stepping back from the stone.

"I cannot say. It is lively this, and not a bit of moonshine here yet!"

Eagerly and anxiously we gazed about us, but saw not a ray of light in the dark valley or ravine; and though neither of us said so at the time, we were not without vague suspicions of having been fooled, or, it might be, lured into some awkward trap; for our ideas of the Spanish character had by no means improved upon acquaintance.

"Do you see the diamond yet, Dick?" asked my friend for the third time.

"Not I. Are you sure that we are on the spot from which it is visible."

"*Here*, by this flat stone, we were to stand. Try a little more to your right."

"I see nothing yet."

There was a pause, during which we walked about, peering into the obscurity.

"Stay—I see something!" I exclaimed, in an excited tone. "Come this way—a yard or so—it *shines now!*" I added, when, after stepping a pace or two to the left, a faint gleam, like the first ray of a small and very distant revolving beacon—a tiny one indeed—stole upon the gloom; and then a steady sparkle, like that of a star, shone through the pitchy blackness that enveloped the whole length and breadth of the hollow.

The hostalero of Orotava had *not* deceived us, for the diamond was now before us, shining visibly.

Like a star, it seemed to shrink and tremble while we gazed at it, which Hislop did, long and steadily.

"Well, Dick Rodney," said he, "you have first seen the diamond, and shall have the largest share, if we get it."

I laughed at this, and asked,

"How does it shine thus in the dark?"

"Because the diamond is a gem possessing a greater refractive power than any other precious

stone, and reflects every atom of light which falls upon it at an angle of incidence greater than twenty-four and a half degrees, even before being cut. I remember that Benvenuto Cellini, in his *History of Jewellery*, mentions a magnificently coloured carbuncle, which was found in a vineyard near Rome simply by its shining in the night. Stand steadily where you are, Dick, and don't lose sight of it, while I advance up the ravine."

He did so thrice, and each time found that on proceeding about twenty yards, it faded away altogether.

"It is very probably a mere rock crystal," said I.

"No rock crystal ever shone with a brilliance like that!" replied Hislop, vehemently; "but whether it is a diamond of the purest water or a will-o'-the-wisp—a spunkie, as we call it in Scotland—I'll give it a touch with a short Enfield, point-blank."

Hislop's rifle was already capped and loaded, but with his knife he shaped an oblong bullet of the hard white chalk which he had procured at Orotava, and carefully rammed it down the barrel.

Having some matches about him, he touched the knob of the fore-sight and the notch of the back-sight with phosphorus, and thus bringing the two lights in a line with the diamond, he took a long and steady aim from his left knee, and *fired!*

The dark valley and the steep mountains rang with a thousand reverberations, as they seemed to toss the sharp report from echoing rock to rock, until it died away in mid-air ; but still the diamond shone as brightly as ever, and our horses plunged so wildly that they nearly broke away from us.

"If my aim is true and the chalk bullet has struck the rock, it will indicate the bearings of the diamond, and we may unship it somehow in the morning," said the practical Scotchman, as he quietly reloaded.

"Morning ? Must we wait here till then ?"

"Well, Dick, it is worth waiting for ; and after all we have gone through since that day when we picked you up adrift in the chops of the Channel, we may sleep here pleasantly enough in one of the thickets."

After lingering a little time and observing the strange sparkle, the actual origin of which we could scarcely realize, we found a thick grove of laurels ; and securing our horses to two branches by the bridles, we unstrapped from each the large coarse horse-cloth, which is frequently folded and placed under the saddle by riders in Spain and its colonies, and in these rugs we wrapped ourselves for warmth and protection from the dew and mosquitoes.

There we lay, each with a loaded rifle by his side and his horse picketed near. Sailor-like, Hislop went off to sleep at once, as sound as a timber-

head ; but for hours I found it impossible to follow so pleasant an example, and lay watching the light of the moon, which, as she rose higher in the sky, descended the vast side of the Peak of Teneriffe, and at last filled the volcanic ravine with a flood of liquid silver.

The loveliness of the night, the solemnity of the scenery, the lonely position in which I found myself and the strange errand on which we had come, all conduced to fill me with contemplation, and many thoughts that banished slumber.

In all the vast expanse of heaven, into which that wondrous peak ascended to the height of more than twelve thousand feet, no cloud was visible ; but there were millions upon millions of stars, rivaling and almost eclipsing the splendour of the moon.

The silver light was poured aslant into the valley through every rent and fissure in the crags, causing masses of shadow between them ; while the wild vines and the cocoa-nut trees were covered with prismatic gems as the dew gathered on their pendent leaves and fruit. So splendid was the moonshine and so mild was the atmosphere, that the wild canaries, like golden birds in some fairy valley, were twittering about us as if day had broken.

At last I grew weary and slept.

With the first peep of day Hislop roused me. It was well to be up and doing before others, who

might observe us, came about the ravine, though it had all the aspect of a lonely and unfrequented place. About two miles of the mountain peak were gilded by the yet (to us) unrisen sun; but in the valley there was only twilight when we folded our rugs, saddled our horses, and proceeding to the stone which bore the name of Juan Hererro, went from thence in a straight line towards the rocky cliff, which closed in the end of the hollow, at the distance of somewhat more than fifty paces.

We reached a sloping bluff of rugged basalt, faced by strange lava-like columnar masses that might easily be dislodged by a crowbar, and all were spotted by luxuriant lichens, which in the wet season would ripen into velvety moss, while long green trailers, covered with gorgeous wild-flowers, grew in every cleft and chasm.

This rocky bluff was about sixty feet in height, and by the increasing light Hislop scanned it with a keen nautical eye, that had been accustomed to detect sights and signs in every state of the atmosphere and elements.

In a minute or less an exclamation of satisfaction escaped him, and pointing upward,

“Dick,” he added, “do you see *that*?”

I looked in the direction indicated, and saw a small white star formed by the chalk bullet upon the face of the rock.

"I do," said I ; " I do !"

"There or thereabout must be this diamond, which is never visible by day."

"But we have neither hammer, chisel, nor crow-bar," said I ; "and our fingers, I fear, wont avail us much."

Hislop threw the bridle of his horse over a laurel-bush ; I did the same ; and in a few minutes we had climbed to the spot indicated by the chalk mark ; and there also we found the conical bullet of his Enfield rifle, flattened out like a florin, and adhering to the face of the rock.

For nearly twenty minutes we examined all the locality of these marks, and at last I discovered something that appeared to be a dull grey piece of rock crystal, half sunk and half projecting from the face of the basalt, and led Hislop to it.

Uttering an exclamation of joy, he declared that, beyond a doubt, *it was the diamond !*

We were almost breathless at this sudden discovery, and looked about us on every hand, like the perpetrators of a robbery, lest we might be observed ; but except our horses cropping the grass, and the golden canary birds that sang on every twig and tree, there appeared no living thing on the mountain above or in the ravine beneath us.

But how were we to extract our treasure, if a treasure indeed it was ?

Vainly we used our knives, till the blades bent and broke ; vainly we punched it with the butts and ramrods of our rifles. It remained solid, hard, fast, and immovable.

Hislop's aim had been a true one, under the circumstances, for the crystal was situated just three inches from his shot-mark.

At last he, being fertile in resources, on finding a sloping rent in the rock, about eight inches above the object of our solicitude, bethought him of blowing it out by gunpowder.

All our cartridges, about thirty in number, were at once opened, and their contents rammed hard or pounded in, with a piece of stick and a stone in lieu of a mallet. The rent was small, and seemed about a foot deep. This impromptu mining was a laborious affair, for it required to be carefully done, and occupied more than two hours, as we had to plug up the aperture tightly, leaving only a very small touchhole.

When all was complete, some cigar fusees and wetted powder were prepared together as a slow-match ; they were inserted and a light applied.

"Sheer off, Dick—give it a wide berth !" cried Hislop.

The fusee smoked as it consumed, but slowly, and breathlessly we looked on, at ten yards' distance.

It seemed to die out, for the smoking ceased, and

the last puff, after curling among the green trailers, passed away.

Hislop was about to ascend and to examine the powder, when there was a loud and sharp explosion; a little cloud of dust rose, and disengaged from the cliff, some fragments of rock, six in number, about the size of half bricks, fell on the bank below.

Uttering a shout, we rushed down, and in a moment Hislop found the diamond adhering to a piece of stone larger than itself!

Some time elapsed before we could fully realize our good fortune or believe in the wealth we had so suddenly acquired.

It seemed like a mere lump of rock crystal, but larger than a goose-egg, and not unlike the Koh-i-Noor—the fabled Light of the World—that mysterious palladium of the destinies of India, before it was cut, polished, and in some degree mutilated, that it might figure in the Exhibition of 1851—as ours may do, perhaps, in that of 1871.

Time will show.

If a pure diamond, this stone was worth nearly seventy thousand pounds!

“Let us keep our own counsel, Dick, about this, till we find ourselves in London,” said Hislop, as he consigned it to his breast-pocket, together with the piece of stone which adhered to it; “and now we must make a good offing while all is quiet here.”

In a minute more, and just as a group of horse-men—farmers and sugar-millers—entered the valley, we had mounted, and were galloping towards Santa Cruz as fast as our horses' heels could carry us.*

* By a note from Hislop, he informs me that the idea of marking with a chalk bullet the locality of the diamond was given him by an old Scottish legend which he heard, of a precious stone, of great size, that shone, but by night *only*, amid the rocks on the beautiful hill of Kinnoul. There it had long tantalized the citizens of Perth, till an ingenious fellow fired a ball of *camstone* at it, and by thus marking the place picked the gem out at his leisure.

CHAPTER LIII.

• THE LAST OF ANTONIO EL CUBANO.

As we entered Santa Cruz we found a great crowd of colonists, citizens, mulattoes, creoles, and negroes, all in motley and gaudily-striped linen jackets and trousers, assembled in the Plaza, where a guard of Spanish infantry, with muskets shouldered and bayonets fixed, kept back the people in the form of a hollow square, about a raised wooden platform, which was covered with black cloth, and whereon was placed the *garotte*.

“What is all this about?” we asked.

“It is for the execution of Antonio, a Cuban pirate, who is to die by the *garotte*,” replied a soldier.

This instrument of the law was simply an upright wooden post rising from the platform. At its base was a low stool, on which the condemned are seated; and about three feet above that appears an iron ring with a handle and screw, by the compression of which they are strangled, instantly or slowly, according to sentence.

The crowd was very impatient; the hour at which the grim scene was to have taken place was now long past. Loud murmurs rose from the people, who had heard most exaggerated stories of Antonio's stature, strength, and ferocity, and glances of anger and impatience were darted at the gilt dial of the town-house, on which a black banner was hoisted but half-mast high.

We recognised nearly all the crew of the *San Ildefonso* in front of the mob; and there, too, were a number of British sailors of H.M.'s steam sloop-of-war *Active*, which had anchored in the harbour that morning.

Several priests in long grey robes were hurrying to and fro, begging "a peseta" to pay for masses for the soul of the condemned man.

As neither Hislop nor I had any desire to witness a scene so barbarous and revolting as an execution, we hastened to our posada to breakfast, where we were joined by Captain José Estremera, who had just come from the Castle of Santa Cruz, where the culprit was confined, and where a most extraordinary scene had taken place.

The little Spanish skipper was quite excited; his black eyes were round as saucers; his olive cheek was flushed crimson; and he spoke so fast and said so much that he nearly choked himself over his eggs and scalding-hot coffee.

His narrative was as follows, and it presented a singular instance of mad ferocity, of cowardice, and despair.

In the morning, probably about the same time that Hislop and I were busy with our diamond, the bastonero, or turnkey, of the Castle of Santa Cruz, which is at once a prison, a barrack, and fortress, opened the door of Antonio's cell to announce to him, in the usual form, that Senor the Judge of the First Instance, accompanied by an Escribano of the Court, had arrived to read over his sentence again, and to convey him to the Chapel of the Doomed, where Fra Anselmo would confer and pray with him prior to his execution.

On entering, the bastonero found Antonio whistling cheerfully, and deliberately using a sharp file, which he had procured no one knew how, but with the aid of which he had released one of his ankles from the fetterlocks, by which his feet had been secured to a ponderous iron bar that traversed his cell. But though still held fast by one leg, he flung himself bodily, like a wild animal, on the unsuspecting bastonero, tore the heavy keys from his leather girdle, and after dealing him a deadly blow on the head, dashed him, bleeding and senseless, against the wall outside the cell door.

He then closed the latter, locked it on the

inside, and resumed the use of the file, which was heard rasping on the steel, while he sang his favourite "Companero, companero," &c.

Aware that the crowd were waiting in the Plaza, and that Spanish crowds were not to be trifled with, in vain did the commandant of the Castle of Santa Cruz, the judge, the escribano, and Fra Anselmo entreat Antonio to cease his fruitless resistance, as his fate was sealed now beyond the reach of pardon even from the captain-general.

Resolved to die as he had lived, like a tiger, Antonio fiercely refused.

The priest next implored him to pass the keys through the iron grating in the cell door.

He uttered a shout of laughter.

The armourer of the castle was now summoned to force the lock ; but the mechanism of it resisted all his strength and skill. Senor the commandant was furious !

The pioneers of the garrison were next ordered in with their iron crowbars and sledge-hammers to beat down the door.

It was small but enormously thick, being built of bars of oak and iron bolted together, and curiously inserted in a groove formed in the massive wall of the old castle.

For an hour they toiled at it, and in the intervals of their labour the sound of Antonio's file was

heard at work, together with his maledictions, his songs, and fierce derisive laughter.

“Ho ! ho ! my fine fellow,” said the Commandant, rattling his sabre, “we shall soon see the end of this fine game !”

At last the door fell in fragments, but unfortunately one strong iron bar still remained across the aperture ; the daylight streamed into the vault, and now, like a baited wild beast, Antonio, who was still fettered to the iron bar, dragged himself towards the doorway, armed with the large key, which was about a foot long.

When another bastonero attempted to enter by stooping, a blow from the key fell like a thunder-bolt upon his defenceless head, and he was dragged out by the heels, apparently in a dying state.

Several others who ventured in met with the same fate ; the whole place became splashed with blood ; the consternation increased, and the authorities were at their wits' end, for the doorway was so small that one person alone could enter at a time, and then only when stooping low—a position which placed them completely at the mercy of Antonio.

For another hour did that frenzied ruffian keep all at bay, replying to the threats of the Commandant, the entreaties of Fra Anselmo, and the suave legal rhetoric of the Judge of the First Instance with laughter and derision.

Tired at last of wielding his large key, or finding that none would come within reach of it, he flung it at the group outside, and broke the nether jaw of the escribano, who left the field of battle with great precipitation.

The Commandant now summoned a party of soldiers, and twelve men of the castle guard came, under the orders of the lieutenant, Don Luiz Pineda, who at once ordered them to load with ball-cartridge.

On seeing these dire preparations, which he could no longer withstand, Antonio ceased in his untimely ribaldry. Great drops of perspiration poured over his low but narrow temples. His dark brow was furrowed deeper, as if by baffled rage and futile ferocity; his black eyes glistened with a fearful glare, and his vast bulky form seemed to dilate in muscular strength and size; the blue pallor of death passed over his thin and cruel lips, but still they were writhed by a mocking smile.

"Senor Don Luiz," said Fra Anselmo, "I entreat you not to have him shot dead——"

"What then, senor padre?"

"But merely wounded, that he may have time for repentance."

"Bueno—then wounded he shall be."

At that moment Antonio struck the young

lieutenant on the face, by hurling the file at him, and inflicted a severe wound.

“Fire!” cried Pineda, mad with rage.

A musket was levelled and fired; and while the vaults of the castle rang with a hundred echoes the loud laugh of Antonio was heard. He had crawled along the iron bar into a dark corner of his prison, where, coiled up at the extreme length of his chain, he escaped the bullet, which was flattened on the masonry.

Again and again the soldiers fired in succession, but missed him, and the vault became full of smoke.

“Basta!” said they; “what is the use of wasting powder on a picaroon who is bullet-proof?”

Pineda now took a musket, and aiming very deliberately, fired. Then Antonio’s chain was heard to rattle as he sprang from the iron bar with a wild bound, for the ball had broken his right thigh bone.

Now he howled, bellowed, and literally foamed at the mouth, as he rolled about on the floor, encumbered by his iron chain, his broken leg, and fettered foot. Two other shots were fired; by one an arm was broken, and by the other a collar-bone. On this he lay still, and called out in a husky voice,

“Senores, I surrender—have mercy!”

Then the pioneers rushed in and dragged him

out. But the spirit of a fiend was yet strong within him, for as he was borne past Don Luiz, bleeding from three wounds, he clenched the hand which yet retained power, and struck him a violent blow.

On that instant the sword of the fiery young lieutenant would have been passed through his heart, had not Fra Anselmo arrested the blade by grasping it.

Just as José Estremera had reached this point in his narrative of the morning's proceedings we heard a tremendous hubbub, and on hurrying to the front windows of the posada, saw a vast crowd running after a low hurdle that was drawn by two mules past the end of the street which led straight towards the great Plaza.

It bore the miserable and half-dead form of Antonio el Cubano to the final scene of his crimes and recent sufferings—the *garotte*.

So perished this sinner !

CHAPTER LIV

CONCLUSION.

I HAVE but little more to add, for with this last episode the course of wild adventures upon which I had been so strangely hurried nearly closes.

A few hours after the death of Antonio, when Hislop and I, with Lambourne, Carlton, and other survivors of the *Eugenie* were waiting in the office of the British Consul to make some arrangements for rewarding José Estremera for his great kindness to us all, we met Captain the Hon. Egerton B——, of H. M. ship *Active*, who was so struck with our story that he offered us all a passage to England, an offer which we accepted with gratitude.

His ship was leaving the African squadron and returning home to be repaired.

“Rodney—Rodney,” said he, ponderingly, when the Consul introduced me; “you ought to have been a sailor, for your name is well known in the service:” and his words brought the memory of

my poor mother's ambition back to me, and I thought of the old picture which hung in the dining-room at home.

After a brief conference with his shipmates Tattooed Tom now came forward, and twirling his fragment of a hat, said that "if the noble captain had no objection, as he, Ned Carlton, Probart, and the other poor fellows of the *Eugenie* were out of a berth, and at uncommon low water, they would gladly ship aboard the *Active*, and enter her Majesty's service."

Captain B——, who saw at a glance that they were all first-class seamen, readily accepted the offer, and promised them the usual bounty; on which they gave three loud cheers for the Queen, and it came from their throats not the less heartily that they were far away from her and in a foreign land, all tattered as they were, with scarcely a shirt to their backs.

"Heaven bless you, my lads," said Hislop; "this is the best thing you can do; and believe me, Captain B——, you will find my old shipmates neither waisters nor green-hands, but thorough A.B.'s."

As they all loved him, another cheer for Hislop followed, and while the Captain went off to the *Active* in his gig, we all adjourned to a posada to have a last friendly glass together.

Soon after, as the war steamer was to sail that evening, a boat under a midshipman came off for us, and then we bade farewell to José Estremera, to his mate, Manuel Gautier, to Fra Anselmo, and the old Governor of Surabaya.

"Come, Dick—we have no time to lose," said Hislop; "let us be off to the ship while daylight lasts; these fellows in Teneriffe haven't missed their diamond yet!"

I shall never forget my emotions of joy when the boat with Hislop and the rest of us came sheering alongside the *Active*.

She was so clean, so trig, so square aloft; with the bright copper gleaming in the water below; her black bulwarks and red portholes, through which her sixty-eights and thirty-twos peered above the brine; the snow-white hammock cloths, with the gold epaulets of the lieutenant of the watch glittering above them; the red-coated marines on her poop and fore-castle; the great scarlet ensign of "Old England" floating at the gaff-peak;—and that no part of the illusion might be wanting, a little marine fife, playing shrilly but sweetly "Home, sweet home," in one of the boats that lay alongside by the guess-warp boom.

She was so thoroughly British in her aspect, so unlike anything we had seen in the seas we had traversed, that we felt *at home* the moment our

feet were on her deck of good old English oak—ay, as much at home as if we stood upon the chalky South Foreland, and saw the green hop-fields of fertile Kent at our feet, with the grey towers of Dover and the white spires of Deal in the distance. Old Lambourne uttered a shout, and pointed to the Union Jack.

One must be abroad and far away to feel to the full the emotions that are excited and the confidence which is inspired on seeing the old flag, that has swept every sea and shore, waving in its pride from the gaff-peak of a British man-of-war !

It is then that we feel “what a sway *one little island* has exercised over this mighty earth.”

Hislop and I dined with Captain B——, who was anxious to hear our story in detail.

Our shipmates were told off to their several divisions, and we were placed in the ward-room mess for the remainder of the voyage.

We sailed that night, and under steam and canvas, as we bore away to the north, we soon saw the Peak of Adam sinking into the dark blue sea.

“Adieu to the Canaries,” said Hislop, waving his hat ; “the next shore we see will be Europe—the white cliffs of Old England, perhaps.”

But next day we sighted the great pitons of the Salvage Islands, a group of uninhabited rocks which are claimed by the Portuguese (perhaps because no

one else cares about them), and which are surrounded by dangerous shoals. One of these isles closely resembles the fantastic rocks of the Needles, at the west end of the Isle of Wight.

On the Salvages the canary birds are so numerous, that an old voyager says "it is impossible to walk without crushing their eggs."

We touched at Madeira, and after a delightful voyage of about sixteen days, ran up the Channel, and came to anchor in the Downs on the 20th of October.

* * * * *

I had been absent from home more than a year, when I found myself in London—in mighty London, with its dark forests of masts and its darker cathedral dome, that meets the eye from every point of view:—a wondrous and bewildering change, after traversing so long the wide and lonely sea !

With a heart swollen by anxiety to learn tidings of my father, my mother, and sisters, I reached the counting-house of my uncle's firm, Rodney and Co., in the City, but there was something so peculiar in my aspect, which pertained neither to sea nor shore, and was unmistakeably outlandish, that old John Thomas, the porter, seemed inclined to shut the door in my face.

A short explanation, however, soon overcame his scruples, and I was then admitted.

My uncle was at Erlesmere ; but his head clerk assured me that my family were all well, though they had long since given me up for dead, as a handsome (he assured me it was *very* handsome) white marble tablet erected to my memory in the Rectory church remained to testify.

My letters from Cuba had never reached home !

As I had no desire to shock my parents by a sudden surprise, a telegram preceded me, and in less than an hour I was off by the express-train for Erlesmere. But with all its speed, the express seemed too slow for me. Marc Hislop accompanied me until he could get a ship ; but before looking for that he meant to visit his old mother, who lived somewhere in Scotland.

After all that we had undergone, all that I had to show my family were the sword and old book found in the water-logged brig, the creese of a mutinous Lascar, the ring given me by the Governor of Surabaya, and though mentioned last not esteemed the *least*, our diamond, of which Marc Hislop and I have not yet ascertained the value, or I should rather say its proper claim to the designation of a diamond.

For Marc Hislop's sake, more than my own, I trust that our sanguine expectations may be realized, and that it may, at all events, furnish him, out of his share of the prize, with the means of providing

comfortably for the mother who so admirably trained him up to a love of knowledge and to a sense of duty.

I have now realized the truth of Goethe's maxim :
"He that looks forward sees one way to pursue ;
but *he who looks backward sees many.*"

And so, tempered by a year of adversity, enlightened by its experience and suffering, I have returned, more than ever determined to make up for lost time, and to work my way manfully to King's College, Cambridge ; after which, the reader who has accompanied me so far, may perhaps hear of me again.

THE END.



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